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## COVER

Original art, "Emily and Sylvia," by David McShane for *Four Quarters*

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## Quarter Notes

JOHN KEENAN

### *Plagiarist Plays Poet; Editor Plays Fool*

"Oh my God!" I exploded. My wife looked at me in alarm. Since I had been quietly reading my Fall issue of *The American Scholar*, she was unprepared for my outburst of shock and indignation.

"What's wrong?" she said. She worries about my blood pressure, among many other things.

"It's him," I said. "The plagiarist who's been stealing this poet's stuff! And I published one of his poems. I mean one of the poems he stole from this guy Neal Bowers. He sent it to me under the name of David Sumner in the Fall of '90 and I used this poem and another one of his—or Bowers' or God knows whose—in the Spring issue of '91. And I sent this guy a check for \$2.00 a line for poems that weren't even his! I feel like a fence for stolen property. I also feel like a gullible fool. Poor Bowers, imagine what he must be feeling. The article says this Sumner has been systematically plagiarizing his published poems and has published them in over 30 journals. At least I'm not alone in being fooled."

"But how would you have known," says my comforting Alice. "You can't have read every poem published and remembered each one."

"I know. That's part of why I feel so upset. I feel so powerless. I have been taken advantage of by someone I trusted. That's an ugly feeling. Authors and editors need one another.

Authors need to believe that their manuscripts will get a reading, and editors need to believe that the work they're spending hours reading is the original creation of the writer. I don't want to think that the manuscript I'm reading is the stolen words and insights of another innocent dupe who only had talent, not guile."

I was warming to the subject now. "OK, so plagiarism is not on the same scale as murder or rape, but when people destroy trust, they're putting acid in the drinking water and putting sand in the mortar that holds society together. When I start wondering about the authenticity of every manuscript I handle, I feel that I have lost something I need if I am to function as an editor. Plagiarism sends out shock waves that reach beyond the original victim, shattering the trust of editors and readers too."

"I don't understand why someone would do that," Alice said, reaching for the magazine I had been reading. "Does the author say why he thinks this is happening?"

"He doesn't really understand it, nor do I. It can't be the money. Many of the little mags pay only in copies. And he doesn't even see his real name in print—just a pseudonym. Maybe he's a frustrated editor. He does make minor changes in the poems he plagiarizes. Maybe that gives him a sense of actual participation in the creative process. If he can't write a successful poem, he can tinker with the words of someone else's and imagine that he's made it his own and then put his own title on it. I'm no psychologist but this behavior seems sick and pathetic to me."



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Alice was reading Bowers' article.

"Oh my God," she said.

"I already said that."

"The plagiarist is bad enough," she said. "But Bowers says some *editors* he warned ignored his warning and published the plagiarisms with no more than a shrug. Apparently not everyone feels as strongly about plagiarized stuff as you do."

"Some folks, editors included, don't get very upset about *any* sleazy tactic. They're immune to moral outrage because they have grown up in a society where lying and stealing is the norm. (At least it's not shooting someone, they will tell you, and everybody does it. Haven't you ever served on a jury?) If some behavior has an ugly name, don't change the behavior, change the name. Don't call it lying and stealing; call it spin doctoring, adapting, borrowing, using a resource person. Stop me if I start sounding too much like Bill Bennett or Dan Quayle."

"Isn't plagiarist an ugly enough word for you?"

"I don't think it is, now that you press me." I said. "It brings up images of students trying to get away with something, or other students too inept to understand that changing a word or two from a source was not enough. And student plagiarism is often easy to detect (even if difficult and time-consuming to prove). No, I think publishing plagiarists who take money under false pretenses deserve good old-fashioned direct language. Words like *thief*, *fraud*, *cheat*, *liar* come to mind. But name-calling won't do any good."

"What will?" said my wife who is nothing if not direct.

"If I knew how to prevent bad things from happening to innocent people, I would write the mother of all self-help books," I said, trying to joke away my sense of helplessness. "Maybe a Clean, Well-Lighted Place is our only refuge. So I am going to clean house and shed light upon the darker side of one person's nature by publicly stating in print:

David S. Jones steals poems written and published by others and submits these poems as his own. He uses the pseudonym **David Sumner**.

"You see? I said to my wife. I can be direct too.

○○○○

JOE COOGAN

### *Take Me Out To No Ball Game*

Freud knew it. Adler knew it. Certainly Carl Jung knew it, and you can bet your id the networks and team owners know that all sports are hotbeds of sex, and a particularly seamy kind of sex at that. Is it possible that all this has something to do with the astounding cancellation of the '94 baseball season? Is it possible that "the sin that dare not say its name" is *baseball*? Think about it.

The startling results of relevant research have been kept secret for the many years since I reported them in an obscure psychiatric journal of limited circulation. Emboldened by the



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Freedom of Information Act, I now have the courage to take the dangerous liberty of exposing them to the world. I first came across them when a brave psychoanalytic pioneer, Dr. Thomas Petty, had the guts to tell all in a paper delivered to fellow members of the American Psychoanalytic Society. Soon after that, professional journals were filled with articles on the basic licentiousness of all sports. Then—suddenly—silence. A look at the *Index Medicus* shows that after a flurry of publicity the subject hasn't been broached in the literature for at least 25 years. Coincidence? You be the judge.

According to Dr. Petty our so-called "National Pastime" is a primitive "to-tem feast" whose participants are desperately trying to win mother by murdering father, a murder signified by "the explosive contact between bat and ball." (No wonder that at the mere mention of the word "Commissioner" team owners take off like startled fawns.) Freudian theory tells us that the pitcher and catcher (Dad and Mom) would like to play alone but can't ignore old Oedipus at the plate who's out to destroy Dad's "phallic exhibition of stuff."

### Seminal Year

But all this has been suspected for years. In 1926, when St. Louis took the Series from the Yankees in the ninth inning of the seventh game after famed Grover Cleveland Alexander struck out famed Tony Lazzeri, famed psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch published a case history about a patient who decided to play baseball as therapy for a severe castration complex.

(Does anyone here know if Michael Jordan's seeing a psychiatrist?) It seems he suffered from the fear that a ball thrown by himself or others might hit him on the head and either kill him or make him an idiot and that getting into games relieved him of his symptoms. What effect it had on the other players is hard to say. A man likely to hit himself on the head with a ball isn't the most reassuring type to have around and you wonder how he could get on any team at all. The Mets didn't exist in 1926.

That was over 60 years ago and there's been barely a peep out of the official psychiatric or sport establishments since. Still, besides Dr. Petty, there are a few other brave souls. Dr. Alfred Stokes is one. Flinging off the old school tie this plucky Englishman exposes *cricket* as being a bit of the old nasty in which the "beautifully weaponed" batsman is "cut off in his prime." He fearlessly unveils the game's "homosexual motifs" and "an all-embracing element linked with life at the breast." He also says we can "feed richly from the game. We chew the [grassy] neighborhood of village cricket: Fielders resemble beasts cropping the ground. Viewed from a height it may be impossible to distinguish a cricket match from a concourse of cows."

Uncowed, Dr. Stokes also discloses that in many different games bats maneuver the ball, which is really "semen." In football, teams "canter out of a natal tunnel." What surprisingly—in view of his description of cricket—he calls "the rather eccentric game of croquet" players are allowed a "sodomastic alternation," now father, now



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son, "prevented by the father from passing even one hoop." (I wonder how often Dr. Stokes passes the refreshment stand.) Dr. Stokes also analyzed lacrosse, "now much played by girls." (He meets a much bouncier type of girl than any I know.) He reminds us that the ball is a phallic symbol and that each girl tries to wrest it from her fellow players and steer it into what, for delicacy's sake, we'll call the "goal." A thought guaranteed to reduce the normal male's flow of testosterone to the merest trickle.

### Are all fish transvestites?

To my mind, Dr. Orestes Carvahlo, a scrappy Brazilian with a lot of savvy, is undisputed world champion sports interpreter. Bar none. And "none" is just about what he bars when he tries to decide if there is any game that isn't gamey. He gives us the sexual low-down on basketball, swimming, diving, golf, water polo, hunting, catching popcorn in the mouth, discus and hammer throw, fishing, flinging stones from slingshots, hockey, skiing, trap-shooting, quoits, billiards, volleyball, badminton, marbles, throwing hoops over bottles, fencing, boxing, tennis, table tennis, murder, war, "competition of any kind," roulette, rugby, and leaping through fiery hoops. (This list is incomplete.)

"If it symbolizes coitus, any game will be popular," he says. The more apparent the symbol, the more popular the game. Which is why "billiards has been dethroned by pool." He discusses the extremely "obvious" sexual symbols involved in basketball with its hoops and dribbles, but is perhaps the first to recognize the intense Oedipal

conflict in roulette which must have a strong "paternal figure because there have been cases when the chronic roulette player killed the croupier." He tells us that all water sports symbolize a return to the womb and that fish are, symbolically, transvestites. For any fish, no matter what its sex, may play either a masculine or feminine role. Hook and bait are masculine symbols, the fish's mouth, feminine; but when caught by a net (feminine) the fish becomes masculine. A thought that rarely occurred to Issac Walton.

Because anything concave is feminine and almost anything that isn't is masculine, and because Dr. Carvahlo has a quick eye for both, space doesn't permit a discussion of all the subject sports he's uncovered. (He also mentions some 90 or so common objects with sexual implications and then, to be on the safe side, he rounds off the list with *et cetera*.) This man is *thorough*.

He is so thorough, in fact, there's hardly any sport we can now practice without running the risk of being condemned, picketed, boycotted and reviled by the Religious Right. It probably behooves us, then, to confine our involvement in any athletic activity to watching it on television. But that might not be a good idea either. According to Dr. Carvahlo, any spectator—even if he's at home watching a telecast—when his team makes a goal experience "a pleasure akin to that of an orgasm."

As a clean living man I hate to poke around too deeply in any mind as dirty as mine, but I actually can't seem to recall this reaction. Although (fair is





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fair) it's true that the last sport I've followed on television was World Cup soccer, where goals were few and far between. So there may be some truth to the theory. On the other hand, maybe Dr. Carvahlo is having trouble with his set.

Whether he wants it fixed or not is his business.



JOHN P. ROSSI

### *Drinking Men*

When I grew up in lower Olney in North Philadelphia in the late 1940s there were six public drunks on my street of 60 houses. I thought about them recently because of how our view of drinking has changed in this country over the last generation. We no longer laugh at drunks. Everyone with any sense regards alcoholism as a disease. In fact, it is probably our most serious form of addiction, more dangerous than tobacco. And yet, unless you live in a college residence hall or attend an NFL game, you don't see public drunkenness anymore. For me and my row house generation, a drunk was as common a sight on the streets of Philadelphia as horse drawn milk wagons, leaves burning in autumn or Fairmount park guards with white hats on the grass dividers along the Roosevelt Boulevard.

My part of Olney was working class or lower middle class at best. The families were stable: there was virtually no divorce, no illegitimacy that I knew of.

The neighborhood was largely Catholic with a sizeable Protestant minority and a handful of Jewish families. In this world where people tended to be friendly and cooperative, there were six hard-working men who almost everyday came home drunk or at the very least, "under the weather." I say "men" because as a young teen I never saw a woman drunk.

Olney didn't have many resources in the late 1940s but it did have a plenty of bars. There were five within a three block radius of my house. They did a booming business and their clientele tended to be loyal. You drank in one place. My street's public drunks spread their business evenly among these five bars.

One of my clearest memories is seeing these men every evening between 5 and 6:30 entering my street from different directions and from different bars. All six held good jobs and as far as I could see were good material providers for their families. What terrible emotional turmoil they caused I never knew.

The most successful of the six was Mr. Keefe. An accountant, he had a white collar job that paid him enough to allow him to own the first TV on the block and to send his large family of four girls and one boy to Atlantic City for the entire summer. He had suffered from infantile paralysis as a child, limped badly and held his left arm against his side. He favored O'Hara's Saloon at Second and Roosevelt Boulevard for his drinking. He could get off the R Bus and be in the bar in a matter of seconds. He usually made it home under his own power although



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we kids watched out for him as he had a tendency to fall into the hedges and then couldn't get up. We would then stop our game of stick ball or touch football and carry him home.

Our routine was always the same. We would open his front door—no one locked the door in the 1940s—and call his wife: "Mrs. Keefe, we got Mr. Keefe here. He fell down." We would then deposit him on his couch and return to our game. All in about five minutes.

No one thought anything about it, nor did we think less of Mr. Keefe. He was a friendly chap and none of us could feel superior because we all had similar relatives in our families.

Of the remaining five public drunks, three stand out in my memory. Augustus Taylor was a powerful, hulking stvedore who hailed from somewhere called "up state." Taylor was the most unpleasant of the drunks, at least when I was teenager. But he outlived all the rest and mellowed as he grew older. He still drank. In fact, I used to get him his consignment of beer and Seagram's Seven every week until just before he died at 75.

Taylor differed from all the rest in that he never looked ravaged by drink. He also was the only one—thank God—who had a car, which he drove recklessly. When he turned the corner, usually entering my street from Third Street, you only had a few precious seconds to scatter: he was an appallingly bad driver even when sober. One of his commonest stunts when drunk was to drive his car abreast of his house and leave it in the middle of the street. One of the neighbors would

then get his keys and park the car against the curb.

When I was about 10, he sideswiped me. I bounced off his fender and wasn't really hurt, but I cried more from shock and fear. He was drunk as usual and left the car and went into the house. Years later I reminded him of that incident which naturally he couldn't remember. But he did tell me something interesting. Despite all his drinking and his terrible driving, he never had an accident nor had he ever received a ticket other than for illegal parking. Talk about God looking after drunkards!

The two heaviest drinkers on my street were also the most likeable and friendly. John Murphy was a bricklayer who worked for John B Kelly Construction Company. He was a short, solidly built man of about 45 when I knew him and a tremendous natural athlete. When he was drunk, a condition likely to happen daily, he had the wildest weave I have ever seen—he zizzagged five to six feet from side to side. On his way home in the evening he would insist in getting into whatever game we were playing. We would let him take his bats in half ball or stick ball or throw a few passes in touch football. Usually his wife, a large red faced woman named Bessie, would come and take him home.

When he was sober, Murphy was the pleasantest of men as well as the nattiest dresser. When he wasn't working he always wore a suit with a white shirt and fireman's suspenders. He loved to sit on the steps talking to you about Connie Mack's great Athletics teams of the late 1920s and early 1930s. He had met Mickey Cochrane,



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the A's Hall of Fame catcher, as a young man and hero worshipped him. I was a baseball fan and Murphy would spend a lot of time reminiscing about baseball in the 1930s with me. I guess he helped sharpen my latent interest in baseball history, an interest that would grow into a near obsession.

I found it very difficult to understand how such a nice man could drink so heavily. As a teenager I often tried to puzzle it out. Was something wrong with his life? It didn't seem so. My uncle, who raised me and was a strict teetotaler, used to say, "some people just drink and that's the end of it." I knew something was wrong, but drinking was accepted as a part of life with few questions asked.

Murphy was the first of the street's drinkers to die. He had a heart attack in his early fifties and never really recovered. I thought at the time that he looked sad and seemed to have lost interest in life. He grew short of breath and couldn't make it to the bar any longer. Someone brought him his booze, but he said he had lost the zest for it. He died about a year and half after his first heart attack.

If Murphy was a particular favorite of mine, the funniest drunk, the nearest thing to a comic drunk we had, was Wally Kazanski. A happy-go-lucky Pole with a large and loud family, Wally knew and liked everyone. He did odd jobs in the neighborhood. But honestly I don't know anyone who ever hired him to do anything. I believe he lived off his wife who took in ironing and watched children during the day. His four children, two girls and two boys, were also good providers. They

were in the late teens and early twenties and all worked. He lived on the corner and left his basement door open all the time so that we kids could borrow his rake to retrieve balls that went down the sewer or use his ladder to climb up and get roofed balls.

Wally always had a terrible-looking dog for a companion. I don't know where he got them but they were always fully grown, mangy-looking mutts. He would sit on his open porch with the dog at his side most of the day. About three times each day he would leash the dog for a walk. The walk was his code word for a visit to the pub. He was flagged from most of the bars in Olney because he would tie his dog up outside while he drank. After awhile the dog would start howling and the neighbors would complain.

All of these men contributed to my real education as I grew up. I learned some serious lessons about life from all of them. I discovered that nice, even successful men could have problems, problems that I didn't understand but were there anyhow. I found it difficult to understand how men like Keefe and Murphy couldn't control themselves. It was all so ineffably sad. But it was also a lesson in living. Unless you were careful you too could fall prey to drink. As my mother was careful to remind me, all the Johns in my own family were drinkers. I never forgot that and I never forgotten those six in many ways fine men. As I grew older, alcohol never had much fascination for me. I enjoyed a drink now and then but I was always wary. That was another lesson I learned in Olney 45 years ago.

## MARTIN GALVIN

## P

The letter P starts every poem,  
ends every sip and jump,  
sometimes ends where it started,  
like pump and pulp and pimp.

Often it's in the center of things,  
like apple and couple. Suppose  
what you like about that. P  
remembers what it was

to be an O, swells when it's done  
into a Q complete with tail,  
an elephant's end to an appetite.  
P minds it Q's like a diplomat,

knows the way to start a piss  
or prayer depends on the puff of silence  
before the sibilant stream, before  
the bold petition to the heavens.

P finds itself halfway between M and S,  
waits in the factory for words to get a life.  
Once they do, P's shows up all over the page,  
point the way to read between the lines.

MARY WINTERS

## Lawyer's Office

Plants high up on the filing cabinet are  
 gifts from clients too poor to pay fees;  
 they think of themselves as beneficent  
 palms shading a tropical beach. The  
 scissors and stapler and paper holer are  
 guilty, kept in a drawer—the  
 rule is no "sharps" or blunt objects  
 out on the desk in case a visitor turns

angry and grabs for a weapon.  
 The walls have their hands over their  
 eyes, ears and mouths—what is  
 said in this office is secret. The  
 filing cabinet is even more furtive;  
 it is envied by the wastepaper basket,  
 which gets the stuff without import.

The chairs think of themselves as  
 psychic: they can gauge a person's  
 tension or temper by the heat from their  
 seat. The desk calendar is smug:  
 it manages all of Time; the curtains,  
 lazy, think they are in a house  
 near the plants' tropical beach.  
 The word processor proclaims; the  
 air conditioner is reserved, un-

comprehending; the radiator generally  
 accountable; the water cooler, of course,  
 the office gossip. The fax machine  
 plots with the telephone which  
 plots with the answering machine.  
 The rug is expansive—only wall-to-  
 wall will do. The typewriter might have  
 lied occasionally.

JANE McCLELLAN

## An Unseasonal Freeze on Jekyll Island

They're playing croquet on the lawn.  
She's all in white—long-skirted, pale,  
a hat tied with gossamer; he, brown  
from sun in white jodhpurs of twill  
and white safari hat. The weather's grown  
cold; our breaths fog the air. Still  
they bend, set their mallet, knock the ball,  
and walk hand in hand with no shivers at all.

Perhaps they're employed for a seasonal clientele.  
Clothed from a museum for a day's  
dissipation as impeccable as they, they appeal  
to the tourists who want more than a glazed  
seascape, a sumptuously quaint hotel,  
and tennis at nine. Surely they've been engaged  
to enact a tropical scene while the mercury  
drops disastrously and hotel rooms empty.

The croquet lawn beneath our window  
lies vacant except for the moonshine. Cloaked  
by windy shadows, white chairs—two  
side by side—stand empty. An anecdote  
to relate at home, the restored hotel a clue  
to roles a couple may enact by rote.  
We know our parts, we've participated week after week:  
a little reading, a little kiss, and then to sleep.

An Essay by  
KAT MEADS

## An Emily/Sylvia Pilgrimage

On a rainy, windy, midweek day in September 145 years after Emily Bronte's death, her hometown in Yorkshire is thick with pilgrims. Funneled from parking lots built for chartered buses, directed by bilingual signs in English and Japanese, they climb up and down the steep, cobbled Main Street of Haworth, buying souvenirs, taking tea or downing a pint at the Black Bull, brother Branwell's favorite pub.

For the Bronte fan, there is quite a bit of territory to cover: the Parsonage Museum, administered by the Bronte Society since 1928; St. Michael's Church, where Patrick Bronte preached; the bleak graveyard between the church and parsonage and the moors beyond. The Haworth Information Center, stocked with maps, postcards, Bronte novels and biographies, is also hopping, but the staff there deal patiently and thoroughly with questions they must get asked a hundred times a day. At Hebden Bridge, the town below the tiny hill town of Heptonstall where Sylvia Plath's bones lie, the lone information clerk is equally patient but comparatively idle. She can direct me to Heptonstall's parish church but not to Plath's grave per se. Given the legion of Plath fans, I'm surprised she can't. Then, again, only thirty years have passed since Sylvia's death. The tea shops and chartered bus tours may yet arrive.

I hadn't thought about Emily Jane Bronte and Sylvia Plath Hughes in tandem until visiting their graves in the space of a single afternoon. Authors born more than a century apart, they both died at thirty, literature's loss. One the daughter of a nineteenth-century parson, the other the daughter of a twentieth-century educator expected to become a Lutheran minister by the grandparents who paid his college tuition. Both Emily and Sylvia were encouraged, even expected, to excel scholastically and artistically. They wrote, they sketched, they grew taller than average—Emily leveling off at 5'7", Sylvia at 5'9". As the most strapping Bronte, Emily got to drag her sodden brother home from the Black Bull. Sylvia, attracted to men larger than she, took one look at the six-foot Ted Hughes at a Cambridge party and decided he was "huge enough" to interest.

As mature women they came across as self-absorbed, temperamental, prone to violent outbursts, a bit intense. They belittled and they mocked. "[H]alf amused and half in scorn" Emily listened to her sister Charlotte read a review of *Wuthering Heights*. Sylvia's journals contained "nasty bits" about friends, rivals, lovers and family that were deleted from the published version. Bored or irritated with the company, both could turn testily silent, ignoring social protocol. Sylvia's glaring-eyed muteness unsettled her sister-in-law and one time literary executrix Olwyn Hughes. The chaplain's wife in Brussels com-

plained that Emily “hardly utter[ed] more than a monosyllable” when invited to her home. Neither seemed to put undue effort in playing nice.

Odd, though, that their work should be judged on similar grounds.

Sylvia had “the rarity of being, in her work...never a ‘nice’ person,” Elizabeth Hardwick notes in a *New York Review of Books* article. Her anger on the page, her appropriation of the Holocaust as personal symbol of oppression and what Olwyn Hughes called her “appalling vindictiveness” have all been criticized. To Aurelia Plath, her daughter’s novel, *The Bell Jar*, represented “the basest ingratitude.” In *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte found “scenes which shock more than attract.” To “strangers...unacquainted with the locality,” the work “must appear a rude and strange production,” she said, fretting elsewhere: “Whether it is right or advisable to create beings like Heathcliff, I do not know; I scarcely think it is.”

Because *Wuthering Heights* was the first piece of literature I read, whenever I feel the urge to re-read it, I suspect the drive of sentiment, that those critics who dismiss it as an overblown Gothic romance have a point. But only before I begin reading. Despite its doomed love theme and merging souls motif, *Wuthering Heights* is solidly a novel of revenge. The Catherine beloved by Heathcliff dies halfway through, the rest of the plot concerns getting even, Heathcliff-style. Although emotions throughout are torrential, they’re rarely rhapsodic. The author accepted a brutality in the human character that neither of her writing sisters, Charlotte or Anne, could face without the balance of redeeming love, human or godly. Of the three, only Emily presented degradation, betrayal, greed and the struggle for power raw, without ruffles or flounces. Life could be dirty and ugly in Emily’s canon, and death was no redemption.

In Sylvia’s “dawn poems in blood,” as she called those final compositions before her suicide, she too dispensed with the ruffles and flounces. Using a lexicon of powerfully elemental images—blood, root, water, stone—she documented betrayal, revenge and an incendiary rage.

Neither wrote what the literary establishment of the time expected women to write. Once Emily emerged from the Ellis Bell nom-de-plume, critics speculated that her brother Branwell produced some, if not all, of *Wuthering Heights*, convinced no female would conjure the story on her own. Ted Hughes removed “some of the more personally aggressive poems” of 1962 from the published version of *Ariel*, setting off one of many controversies regarding destroyed and reordered manuscripts owned by the Plath estate. Emily’s authorial choices were tampered with when Charlotte undertook “the sacred task” of republishing her sister’s work in 1950. Anxious to present Emily’s work in what she considered the best possible light, Charlotte changed the punctuation, the paragraphing, the spelling and the dialect in *Wuthering Heights* and excised all Kingdom of Gondal references from the poetry.

If Emily and Sylvia wouldn’t censor themselves, those who lived longer would perform the service for them.

Both tried, for a brief stretch, to teach. “Oh, only left to myself, what a poet I will flay myself into,” Plath wrote between grading papers at her alma mater, Smith College. Emily preferred the house dog to her students at Law Hill and



said so. Sylvia lasted a year at Smith, Emily a few months at Law Hill. Away from home, Emily turned morose and despondent, then physically ill. She preferred to live in Haworth, take care of the parsonage and her pets, wander the moors and write.

The highlight of the first floor of the Bronte Parsonage tour is the dining room where the sisters wrote. Engravings of Thackeray and the Duke of Wellington hang on the walls—Charlotte's heroes, not Emily's. The dining room also contains Emily's death bed, a sofa that looks uncomfortably short for a woman of 5'7". Emily's bedroom upstairs holds no bed. After she died and Charlotte married the curate Arthur Nicholls, Charlotte enlarged the bedroom next door, reducing Emily's to closet size. Not much wider than the window that overlooks the church graveyard, it's furnished with nursery toys. As a little girl Emily slept, or tried to sleep, in a bed shoved next to the window and its view of wind, rain, graves, darkness and ghosts. She had terrible nightmares. "Sleep brings no rest to me;/The shadows of the dead/My waking eyes may never see/Surround my bed."

Biographers, straining to categorize, have decided that the creator of the salacious Heathcliff was a "sexless" creature herself or, more poetically, a "passionate celibate." Whatever her personal situation, Emily didn't have to look far to observe the lovelorn. Branwell pined for the married Mrs. Robinson, the mother of a former pupil; Charlotte pined for her (also) married teacher, Constantin Heger; Anne went doe-eyed at the sight of curate William Weightman. Surrounded by a suitor case of refined teachers and curates, the sly and "sexless" Emily took out her pen and created the rough and tumble Heathcliff, a brooder with a pronounced sexual pulse.

The building that inspired Wuthering Heights (the residence) may or may not have been an abandoned farm house high on the moors, but Top Withens is within striking distance of the museum gift shop and accessible by hiking the Bronte Way. The path through meadows and fields is also maintained by the Bronte Society, and empty, except for sheep, because of the nasty weather. Stone fences dating from the eighteenth-century crisscross the fields. What looks to the modern eye like natural beauty is actually a man-made phenomenon. Large-scale tree clearance and animal grazing during the Bronze Age created the moors, and continuous grazing combined with the effects of a cooler, wetter climate keep them stark and foreboding.

Sylvia hiked to Top Withens while visiting her new in-laws in Heptonstall. "The sky leans on me, me, the one upright/among all the horizontals," she wrote in the poem "Wuthering Heights." When you reach the top of the ridge, the sky does bear down hard, but it's the wind that evokes Emily's text: a fierce, steady buffeting that flattens heather and sways sheep.

Emily isn't buried as she buried her character Catherine Earnshaw amid the wild moors; she lies in the family vault below St. Michael's. The closest you can get to her grave is the section of stone flooring above it, several layers removed.

“Dying/Is an art, like everything else,” Sylvia wrote. She and Emily were both more than a little in love with death. They made its acquaintance early: Emily lost a mother and two sisters; Sylvia, a father. Their attraction was physical as well as mystical. Visiting her father’s grave, Sylvia yearned “to dig him up. To prove he existed and was really dead.” Heathcliff twice digs up Catherine, immediately after her burial and eighteen years later. Because of those postmortem investigations, he tells the superstitious Nelly, the living stand “a better chance of keeping (him) underground.”

Haunting by the dead is a given in *Wuthering Heights*, in Emily’s poetry and in Sylvia’s. Disturbing, yes, but the visitations also provide a certain amount of comfort, the last strand of connection between the living and the dead. “You said I killed you—haunt me, then!” Heathcliff begs the dead Catherine. The dead in Sylvia’s poem “All the Dead Dears” grip “through thin and thick”: “From the mercury-backed glass/ Mother, grandmother, greatgrandmother/Reach hag hands to haul me in.” As inheritor of his dead wife’s literary estate, Ted Hughes must traffic constantly with her ghost. “Peel off the napkin Do I terrify?” wrote Sylvia.

“Memory has power as real as thine” wrote Emily.

A consumptive Emily caught cold at her brother’s funeral and died within weeks. Sylvia died after setting out milk for her sleeping children and sticking her head in the oven. Unlike 1953, when she swallowed sleeping pills and curled up in the dirt beneath her Wellesley home, she didn’t rise “[o]ut of the ash” Lazy Lazarus-style again.

Because she refused medical care and called the homeopathic remedies passed along from W.S. Williams to Charlotte “quackery,” Emily has been accused of a willful death. But why should she have trusted medical miracles? She watched her mother, two sisters, aunt and brother expire in the care of expert physicians, and her front yard was lined with soggy graves.

Few argue that Sylvia was mentally “well.” Even the edited version of her journals show a woman battling deep, debilitating depression. That Emily was a touch on the mad side, or headed that way, has been suggested by Muriel Spark. If she had not “died of consumption,” Spark contends, “she would have died mentally deranged.” Since she remained workably sane until the end, why not the continuation of a routine built around tramping the moors, managing the family’s railroad investments, mocking Charlotte’s appetite for London literary society and ultimately unconventional marriage to Arthur Nicholls, writing more or writing nothing? Why not an eccentric, reclusive finale, but still a fate this side of crazed?

A public footpath runs from Hebden Bridge to Heptonstall, Sylvia’s final resting place. Years ago one of the steeples of the town’s parish church was struck by lightning and now sits on the ground, enshrined where it fell. The older the dead, the closer they huddle around the lightning-struck church beneath tilting tombstones decorated with lichen. The tombstones of Sylvia’s circle, laid out in a newer cemetery across the road, are primarily granite. As a group they seem to hunker, less high than wide. The marker that reads Sylvia Plath Hughes squats near the front of the cemetery, along the ’60s row, and although I have come a long way to find it, when I do, I feel a jolt.

Unlike Emily's, Sylvia's grave is totally accessible to the pilgrim. I can touch the headstone, the mud above the coffin, the thorns of the two permanent, straggly rose bushes growing on the mound. I can recite one or ten of her poems in homage, standing above sprigs of heather and berry branches and a single pink carnation wrapped in cellophane.

Without the help of guidebooks or organized tours or bilingual signs, Sylvia's fans have found the place.

People don't last, but a "good poem lasts," Esther Greenwood declares in *The Bell Jar*. A "good poem lasts a whole lot longer than a hundred...people put together."

If that statement weren't true, I wouldn't have crossed an ocean to stand beside a poet's grave.



WILLIAM VIRGIL DAVIS

## Castles in the Air

We find them everywhere,  
castles capped on hills.

We struggle up the steep  
inclines the same way men

in other times climbed  
(lived and died) beneath

such battered battlements.  
All that we know of history

history will know of us.  
Already part of the past,

our fingers finger the  
ancient cracks and crevices,

our feet find, fit firmly,  
into the old footholds.

JOHN FANDEL

## At the Hearing

Who wants yr Dream House?  
 I want the real  
 homestead, the old Manse  
 where tread five still speaks Archaic Squeak,  
 (Creak)  
 and a shelf in the bookroom bows with Browning—  
     bound in buckram, brown—  
 and the ancient Orientals have no nap—  
     worn thin as the skin of some exotic Dragon—  
 (esoteric)  
 and all our names are scratched in the Attic panes—  
     (etched)  
     to make the family tree a filigree—  
     by moonlight—  
 and the big bronze knocker gets the tails awagging,  
 and the fire plays a Fugue in pops & crackle,  
 (Pops) (rackle)  
 and all Summerslong the Cosmos taps at the sill,  
 and...

All the above goes, of course, unsaid,  
 unspoken,  
 goes without saying,  
 so many papers to sign, and all,  
 now the old Man's gone.

Codicils & Taxes.

The Wrecker comes at dawn.  
 (Wrecker)

A Story by  
PETER SLATER

## Storm

The old lady sat on her high verandah and gazed at the tiny bird balancing precariously on a stalk of the pink bougainvillea that was entwined on the railings. The poor thing seemed tangled in thin strips of sunlight. She swayed some more on her rocking-chair, and narrowed her eyes, so that the yellow light in the shrub became a cluster of silver needles. The bird, speared by light, jerked and tilted its head to regard something out of one quizzical eye. When the chair had slowed, Mrs. Issacs removed her teeth and, with a hair-pin, began to pick out the shreds of mango which had become embedded. For a moment, the bird watched an old hand, a strand of yellow and thin, flashing metal. Mrs. Issacs sensed that she had thus entered the bird and was pleased to think that occasionally one did achieve at least a certain communion with a simpler world.

"Tell me!" she commanded, proud of the fact that she had no need to look up as Mr. Austen, the gardener, crept quietly past, the spade over his shoulder. She knew that she had startled him. He always hoped to avoid her; but never could. "Have you checked the paw-paws?" Her study of teeth was intense. Intricate maneuvers.

"Acourse I've checked the bloody paw-paws!" By carelessly, but unfailingly, chucking at random an obscenity into every sentence he uttered to her, Mr. Austen felt that he equalized their relationship somewhat. This was Twentieth Century Queensland, not England in the bloody Middle Ages; but this tyrannical dame had no sense of the times, and ran her large, isolated house and acres of verdant gardens as if they were the fading remains of a feudal kingdom.

Awaiting further orders on this hot afternoon, Mr. Austen stopped and changed his spade from one shoulder to the other. The mistress, however, ignored him so that, mildly, he was humiliated. He pressed on. The sight of her teeth caused him unconsciously to push his lower set of falsers out with his tongue. Jutting from his mouth, they bounced slightly. Taking the air.

"Now!" murmured Mrs. Issacs and, for an instant, caught herself wondering why, exactly, she was sewing her teeth. She slurped them back in. "Now. Boney-poney time for doggies."

The fat, ginger dachshund, splodged on the floor beside her, lazily lifted an eye.

"Boney-poney time."

Ah!—this was what she liked. Peter was now standing, gazing up at her and wagging his tail, and there was the scamper of feet that indicated the fast approach of little Vicky. Good, dutiful animals. She sighed placidly, and made an attempt to rise. It was always tricky, getting out of this chair. It was far too low, and not stable. "Hup!" No. She released the tension, and was irritated by the tickling in her arms. Rest a bit. Try again. Nothing unusual. Happened almost every time. One, two, three, heave! The garden shook into a blur, her

heartbeat seemed outrageously fast, it was hammering her down, it was the weight inside her, not allowing her to move. Oh, this was silly. She gave up out of boredom. She had once had a place in the Australian swimming team for the Oceanic Games. Why were some exertions exciting to watch, and others not so? You wouldn't pay money to gawk at old folk struggling out of chairs, and yet people parted with millions to watch gymnasts and swimmers. Perhaps it was to do with speed. Although Chess was popular enough.

Strong resolution. Strong resolution to get up, go to the kitchen and fetch bones for the dogs. Up, Eva! To work! Wait a moment, allow Mr. Austen to pass...Where would he be going with that rake? What had he done with the spade? These questions she longed to ask, but couldn't summon enough breath. She gulped in large mouthfuls, like a drowning fish. Her ears blocked and began to ring. This was good, she felt. It made her irritated, and that would be a powerful ally in the fight against despair. Mr. Austen disappeared. Right. Irritated. Oh, come on! For a full minute, every part of her body concentrated on the simple matter in hand. But her limbs were filled with feathers.

No. She sank again. A useless lump. Vicky whined. "Oh, do be quiet!" she whispered hoarsely. Oh, heck, she was stuck! It crossed her mind that maybe Death had come and forgotten to take all of her, or was maybe carting her away, piece by piece. From somewhere deep inside her vast garden, a kooka-burra cackled. Ah, well, she considered soberly, I won't get up just now. I won't bother for the moment. I'm much too tense. Just rest a while longer, enjoy the last moment of sunshine. This isn't the first time I've been stuck in this chair. So thinking, she calmed down and again made herself at ease.

Presently, Mr. Austen showed up again. "I'm bloody off," he announced, pushing his cap to a jaunty angle.

Mrs. Issacs nodded and raised her hand in the manner of a string puppet. She wanted to tell him to plant that avocado, first, but dared not trust her voice.

"I'll bloody see ya tomorra!" He turned his back on her and strode away, singing *Airdvairnce Orstrallia Fair!* He knew this annoyed her: a staunch Royalist, she regarded the song as blasphemous Republicanism.

She moved her head to watch him through the bougainvillea. He went up the gravel path, between the rain trees, turned the corner; and was gone.

The sun was sinking, and Mrs. Issacs did not want to move. She was comfortable where she was, thank you. She was not afraid. Peter's tail beat on the wooden boards. "Pe-ter!" she admonished, and was pleased to think that a dog might take her wheeze for a fully-fledged word. High clouds sprawled purple amongst blue.

Life was a tease. She must have dozed off. The air was thicker with darkness, and there was the soft steam hissing of insects. A gecko on the wall tutted critically—t-t-t-t-t-t. Time, surely, for a good cup of tea and slice of banana cake. "Come on, Mummy, make yourself a pot of tea." Mummy took a deep breath, Mummy heaved. But Mummy was frozen solid. A mosquito stuck into her right ankle, she slipped it off with her left big toe. The extremities moved all right. Her skin twisted into tiny points of itching. Oh, what she wouldn't give for a good scratch!

A large fruit bat swung low over the garden. Deep black it was, a shred of some terrible night. Mrs. Issacs breathed steadily.

A sharper irritation made her glance down, and she could just make out a cluster of mozzies feasting on her bare right foot. She waved it, and they gripped on, seeming to probe all the deeper. She kicked them off with her other foot. The itching was something shocking. Rubbing with her opposite heel provided some miserable comfort.

Distant thunder rumbled.

Remembering the good old films, she commanded, "Peter, Vicky, fetch doctor!" in a ranuncian croak. But they were mere dachshunds of the forest, and not interested in Hollywood heroism.

Green sparks of fireflies bounced on invisible surfaces. To be a firefly looked so simple. *Thump*: a neat, firm parcel of muffled sound as a coconut fell. A coconut also enjoyed a simple life.

Peter barked. He quite startled her. She startled herself by saying, "Shut up, you bloody dog!" She fixed her eyes firmly on nothing.

The frogs, sensing a storm, began their heavy grinding and chunking: thick, metallic and industrious. The cicadas joined them with a hissing and whistling. Somewhere, something was wheezing like an old bronchial man fast asleep. Dreadful noise, factory of noise!—the infernal clanking making a night city out of the quiet bush. You couldn't hear yourself think. "Quiet, frogs!" she ordered, and found that her mouth was dreadfully dry. She thought of ice-cold water. *To quench thirst*: the words themselves were like slurping crushed ice. Have another go. Arise, mother! But she hadn't an atom of strength. She recalled how sturdy she felt when, as a child, her mother bought her a new pair of sandals, and that afternoon she had stood on tiptoe and reached further than she would ever have thought possible in order to pluck an apple from the sun-rich branches of their garden tree.

A thin necklace of lightning flickered in the sky, and a swift breeze soughed through the bougainvillea. There came a sharp crack of thunder. The dogs whimpered, and crawled beneath her chair. A thick strip of lightning fell in a clear straight line from heaven to earth—for a moment, the illuminated massy clouds looked like a vast mountain range being rent asunder. Suddenly, a vast torrent of rain crashed down, drowning out most other sound. It was like sitting beneath a waterfall. Pools of light flashed almost continuously—you could have read a book—but, apart from the occasional ear-splitting crack, the thunder was reduced to a constant low grumbling. A stray gust of wind splashed the equivalent of a bucket of water over Eva. She was soaked.

Presently, light of another sort stroked the house and verandah. The rain it caught seemed like black iron filings swirling in an illuminated tube. The light swung this way and that, finally coming to a halt and settling at a spot by Eva's feet. Eva and the dogs regarded it placidly.

"G'day!"

She had known it would be him, so was not in the least surprised. Carrying a powerful hurricane lamp, he strode up the steps.

"How's it goin'?"

She did not reply; merely stared. *Go away!*

"I've come ta pick up the few bloody things owin'. Eh?"

Mr. Austen was a tall, thin man, with a lean, stubbled face and sunken eyes. He wore a wide-brimmed bush ranger's hat, and a long raincoat, black with rain. He was dripping. He hung the lamp on the hook close by Eva's head, and entered the house. Eva heard him muttering and cursing every time he crashed into things. *There's no light*, she wanted to say. *The generator's off*. But then came a gush of light from behind: she might have been swept away by its brilliance. She attempted, in vain, to turn. Peter and Vicky were no good. All they could do was cower further beneath her chair.

After a time, he came out, carrying the portable battery-operated television. "Most important bloody things first!"

*What have you done to me?* she tried to say; but her mouth was too dry, her tongue thick and furry so that her words were no more than lumps of stupid sound.

He wavered down the steps. Narrowing her eyes, she could make out the covered Holden truck parked in the driveway. He loaded the TV, and came back, grinning.

"Shocking bloody night, eh?"

In he went again. A shock of wind slammed the screen door behind him. The hurricane lamp shook, and shadows and shadows of shadows slivered across the verandah.

"Sporty, weren't ya bloody once?" He walked past clutching her tennis rackets, swimming medals and cups. His pockets bulged with balls.

Mr. Austen went back and forth, removing her pictures, her books, the photos of Reg and the kids—even including that nice one of Stella and Robbie on the beach at Surfer's Paradise—the calor gas cooker. He was quite smitten with Reg's ukulele, and strummed *The Lily of Laguna* before throwing it carelessly into the wagon. All her jewelry, he took. Her last high school photograph: Form Four, Mareeba County High—Colin, Geffrey, Bruce, ?, Chatelaine, Miss Trenchard, Martie, Celia, ?, Eva, Bertha, Sara, Peter. Seed packets, diaries, letters, her best pen, that mask from New Guinea (Reg had served a spell on the Kokoda trail in '44). Robbie's gaily painted didgeridoo. Stella's rag doll.

*Oh, Mr. Austen! What good are any of these things to you?*

Reg's stamp album, Robbie's teddy-bear scrapbook, the half dozen bound volumes of *Organic Farming*.

"Take a decko at this!" He thrust an electricity bill before her eyes. It was the last electricity bill they had ever received before upping stakes and moving here from Brisbane, all those years ago. "Fifteen dollars and thirty cents." A lot of money in those days. "What's the use a keepin' this bloody thing, eh?"

The goats (what were they doing in the house?). Jars of preserved kumquats. "Youse're a preserved kumquat, Eva Issacs!" Mosquito coils. The trunk full of the kids' old junk: dolls, baby-clothes, a brightly-colored ball, a rattle, a windmill that, when you turned the sails, played *My hat it has three corners* in high, tinkling notes, a child's cricket bat (the sound of sunny, late afternoons: *Tuck!* "That's a six!" "Only if we can find it!" Long shadows on the lawn; giggly laughter).

Oh, no, not the stethoscope! They had bought it in order to listen to Robbie's heart beating strongly inside her womb. "How can we tell it's not my heart?" "We can't. Does it matter?" Robbie and Stella always remembered Christmas.



They were good to their old Mum. Of course, they never came to visit; but then young people are always busy these days. She had brought them up good. Other people's children were serving life sentences. Robbie and Stella both belonged to the same Church in Townsville. Lovely little kids they had too. Charles, Daniel, Nathan, and Ruth. Not so little anymore, actually; but she always remembered them as they were when she had last seen them.

Mr. Austen was carting out her whole life and dumping it into the back of a truck in the rain. At least he must think it worth it. She had lived a worthwhile life.

The family Bible. They had had Devotions, every morning, before breakfast. They had stood behind their chairs, and the children had to recite a learned passage from the Scriptures. If they faltered, Reg would reprimand them gently, at the time, then only later take the strap to them. He had been a good father.

The chocolate-box, with the picture of *The Drover's Return* on the lid, filled with her letters from Kenneth. She had never been able to forgive Reg for taking the strap to her in front of the children. If he had punished her in private, she might have been able to accept it. Curious, how one small action can change everything.

A life. It was quieter here, now. She missed them all. She had been wrong to rejoice when finally they had buried Reg beneath the casuarina in Mareeba cemetery. She should have tried harder. It's always nice to have someone else around, no matter their faults. You have to compromise.

Mr. Austen squatted before her, and smiled. It was such a beautiful smile. He wasn't such a bad bloke, after all, perhaps. "We coulda bin mates," she heard herself say, in an unaccustomed, broad Ocker accent. "Yair. Well."

A smudge of pale, damp sun appeared behind low, thin clouds, and hazy mist swirled about the lush, tropical garden. The silence was fragile and tender, recovering from the crashing of the storm. Then came three high notes from a bird somewhere deep inside a confusion of vines, creepers, flowers and fruit; the first, confident sound of day. repeated every day. Buds gradually opened and more birdsong twined in the warm air. The clouds cleared, releasing light which was broken into threads by the trees, before splashing onto a mossy carpet, a large rock, a fallen mango. A white cockatoo crashed onto a banana leaf, and the light swooped to claim the shade exposed by the swaying leaf: *phweeoo!* whistled the bird. The awakening morning became a gorgeous, luxuriant swarm of noise and light: the air filled with a seething mass of murmuring, hissing, sighing seared by occasional parrot shrieks, and a slow craaak! as of wood scraping on a washboard. Sound and sunshine twisted and tumbled in exultant celebration. And the dogs howled.

Mr. Austen was the first to find her. She was in the attitude of reaching out for something. Or perhaps offering. He rearranged her, and muttered a sort of prayer, just in case. Then he stalked off angrily. He would go straight to the Undertakers. Forget the bloody doctor. Didn't need a doctor to work out

the obvious. Avoiding the road, he took the path through the trees. Had he had a machete handy, he would have slashed at the thickets and trailing vines of light that threatened to smother him. He had always known that this would happen, one day. You do your best by people, and look what bloody happens.

Something made him stop. He turned. The two dogs were paddling along quietly behind. "Gern, get away!" he ordered fiercely. When they merely looked at him, he scooped up a random handful of leaves, dust and small stones and threw it at them. They scampered back a little way, and regarded him from a safe distance. The thin dust hung in the air like a frail cloud. "Scoot!" he said, flicking his hand.

He carried on. He knew they were continuing to follow. What did he want with a couple of useless dogs? Why couldn't they understand? Stupid bloody animals. "I was only her gardener," he said. "She never even let me in the bloody house." Not once in twenty years. Not even for a cup of tea. What had she thought?—that he might have made off with her family china?

The garden would go to ruin in a matter of weeks. The bloody forest wouldn't wait.

He quickened his pace and emerged from the trees onto the quiet metalled road. Now that he could hear the clack of his boots, he felt a surge of confidence. To hell with her! Her dying would make no difference—no one could stop him from popping up here, now and again, to check on the fruit. "Free country, aint it"

The dogs were now trotting beside him.

"She trusted you more'n she trusted me! Trusted a bloody dog more'n a man!"

He wanted the dogs to come home with him. They would be company, and something solid from a past life. All he had to do, then, was keep on walking. But, instead, he picked up two sharp stones from the side of the road and aimed one at each of the dogs. With high yelps, they ran back into the forest. There

Mr. Austen stood and took time to recover his balance. He might have been hoping for reassurance from the fact that he, too, could reject. You had to make some sort of effort. He waited. The forest was silent except for a high, repeated *peep-peep! peep-peep!* that seemed to be the steadily released, sonic essence of heat. He waited, but nothing seemed to happen except for a thickening of pain around his heart. Everything came to these moments, in the end, whether you went through the recognized motions of passion, or not. You did not have to declare love, or touch, or even smile. It was enough merely to pass by at a distance. You walked by, and swore, and took an order; and that, just that it seemed, qualified you for grief. Maybe it was to do with those moments when he had seen her without her having been aware: such as when she walked, her dress shimmering with pools of light, through the banana grove; and that time she tried to suck the juice from a soursop by piercing its skin with a straw; and then from far-off he had heard her singing a lullaby for a long-ago child. Daft old bugger, she was. But he had seen her.

And so one more life had ended, and Mr. Austen pressed on. Maybe, some day, whilst hacking down a banana palm, or digging a trench, he might work it all out. Revelation didn't come when you looked, but when you turned away. Or, if not revelation, then at least he had once seen the quiet, crusty moon

when, on leaving the noisy pub he had slipped and fallen in the gutter. And another time he had been attacked by a hundred bloody bats in a forest cave, and had almost died of laughter. Sometimes you understood simply by stretching to put on your shirt.

Better bloody press on. "I gotta body for yez!"—he rehearsed the line for Mr. Fisk, the Undertaker.

Press on.

And the dogs once more slipped out of the forest and began to follow the man.



LYN LIFSHIN

## The Child We Will Not Have

Will be a boy. Dean Michael  
will go to law school and play  
football. I'll listen to September  
get loud and then quieter,  
sneak into the smallest room

to write s.o.s. notes in returnable soda  
bottles, my belly crinkled as the toe nail  
that falls off after a torturous summer  
of pointe. This child you always wanted  
swims in my arms like that gone nail,

I talk to it with my mouth shut. It teaches  
you to sign, lip reads my nipples. In the movie  
of September, some of the stills are missing.  
I clutch the baby like someone at a crash site,

hear glass fall. The child we will not have  
is all we wanted, all that holds us together.

LYN LIFSHIN

## Mint Leaves at Yaddo

In frosty glasses of tea as light went  
 tangerine. Here, iced tea is what we make  
 waiting for death with this machine  
 my mother wanted. Not knowing if she'd be here  
 for her birthday, we still shopped wildly,  
 brought her this present for. For twenty days  
 my mother shows only luke warm interest in tea,  
 vomits even water. But I unpack the plastic,  
 intent on trying this sleek device while my mother  
 queen of gadgets—even a gun to demolish flies—  
 maybe the strangest thing she got me, can still see  
 the tall glasses that seem summery on what is  
 the longest day. Soon the light will go she says,  
 the days get shorter. I can't bear, she murmurs,  
 another winter in Stowe and I think how different  
 this isolation is, this iced tea, this time  
 that stretches where little grows as it did,  
 green as that mint, except my mother,  
 smaller, more distant, gaunt.

A Story by  
ANDREW WRIGHT

## *The Mitigations of Lucy Fraser*

Yes, I am Lucy Fraser. Thank you, I will sit down. How astonishing, the Rousseau on the wall: that cheerless, unradiating sun, that greedy black-faced lion, that unresisting gypsy, those gloomy and foreboding ferns and palms. Still, why should I be astonished? I knew better than to expect the horsehair couch from which to recite my history. But Rousseau: now that is interesting, and yet on reflection a just choice for this setting. I've always thought him so—unguarded, so elemental, so direct, not really primitive or naive as he is sometimes said to be. And the gray walls, cool and civilized, a good gray, what I call French gray. Nice contrast. But why not in such an office as this one? I like your choices, doctor. Quite truthfully I am a bit uneasy. Oh, I was born late enough not to be distrustful of what my grandfather called "alienists." But the Rousseau painting, it is actually liberating: I've always liked his use of green, or rather greens, they go down and down; they are enveloping but they don't smother. But enough about Rousseau.

It wasn't until Adam was twelve and Caroline ten that I first begin having the times of blackness—that's what I call them; clinically, as I well know, they are called depressive episodes. Until then I had gone along more or less evenly. Of course no life is perfectly smooth, and some days are brighter and better than others; and in my low moments, until then, I could tell myself that there was a cause or collection of causes that brought me temporarily low. But the blackness was different: what I saw ahead was—the same old thing, a repetition unto death of what had already happened, what was happening now. When I thought I might become what my mother was! And life was stale. Richard was wonderfully understanding; he always is. But he couldn't do for me what needed to be done, to transform me from an anxious and now unhappy person into someone lighthearted and disposed to be happy. I have always hated the idea of happiness. Does that shock you? At any rate, it does shock me, but there you are.

"Relax?"—I can't hear the word any longer. I know better than to think that alcohol and drugs, however mild the doses, are the solution to anybody's problem, and I have tried other ways of dealing with my anxieties. I once had a number of lessons in auto-hypnosis that I found temporarily comforting. But I do not yield readily, even to Richard.

Why? I don't know. That's why I'm here . . . But I'll go straight to my mother: how she looms from beyond the grave! But when I was being formed, being made into the kind of woman that I have become, she was so entirely alive! Picture her, please, coming into the house after having been

away for several days (for me blessed days) at a trustees' meeting at Smith. This was shortly after the war, and lady trustees still wore hats and gloves and good tweed suits. She carried a dispatch case with her initials on it, and it seemed to be full of papers, no doubt important papers, though as a matter of fact I never opened it myself and didn't care what was inside. Even when silent she was a force, and she never stopped being so till the day she died. She was tall and slender, with a face some thought beautiful because it was animated, interested, susceptible of being amused; her eyes were wonderfully big, and she looked at you, *looked* at you.

Beside her I was a pygmy, not physically but otherwise, or so I felt; and quite naturally she wanted me to grow out of that way of thinking. Of course she would ask me about what had gone on while she was away. She knew when the school hockey team played its games; she knew when the all-dreaded Latin examinations were given—she had a notebook, and in it she kept neat account of everything to do with her and her family. One reason why she knew all about my school was that she had gone there herself (and of course was named Head Girl in her senior year); and while I was there she was one of the trustees (there are certain people whose destiny is to sit on boards, sit in judgment; and she was one of them). I was Lucy Harkins all right, and all the teachers called me Lucy, just as they called the other girls by their first names: the school was small enough; it was that kind of school anyway, but I was always conscious of being the daughter of Dorothy Miller Harkins, class of 1931. Goodness knows, her shining example was mentioned often enough by the headmistress.

My mother wanted me to be like her, or perhaps an improved version of herself—isn't that the usual dream of parents? But I always fell short; she was always disappointed. For instance, she wanted me to learn to play the piano, not brilliantly, but acceptably. So once a week Frank the chauffeur drove me—miles and miles, it seemed—to the brown and cheerless house of Miss Ziegler, who saw me through what she called majors by halves and other exercises. I rather liked Miss Ziegler even though she smelled of mothballs and tended to be severe; but I found the lessons tedious and the atmosphere of her large, damp house dismal. Nor did I ever practice enough to become even passably competent, though I studied, or looked at, various pieces in Miss Ziegler's *Easy Bach*, *Easy Beethoven*, and *Easy Schubert*. My mother always nagged me about piano practice, day after day—not every day but whenever she remembered, which was often enough. I liked music itself better than learning how to perform; in fact, and perhaps I can thank Miss Ziegler for that, I do love music: it's one of the consolations of life. It seems ironical, now that I look back, to realize that my mother didn't play the piano herself, and had no particular affection for music.

One thing I could do to demarcate myself from my mother was to be untidy. She was so remarkably well organized and the house was always so *perfect*—in taste, arrangement, and amenity that I took dark pleasure in flinging my clothes about when I got undressed, leaving the drawers in my bedroom half-open, and the closet door too, revealing heaps of clothes within. This infuriated my mother, just as I intended, and she tried various punishments, all unsuccessful. One was refusing to let me come down to dinner until my room was picked up. But I always won such contests because ultimately I

had to be fed; I was then thin as a stick and remained so until well into my twenties. No one, not even my mother, could bear to see me starve, but I had little appetite in general, and less when contending against her. Perhaps, however, she has won after all. I am now as tidy as you please, and I too make endless lists; the difference is, or so I tell myself, is that I know the futility of doing so.

It went without saying, that I was to go to Smith and repeat my mother's successes there. In our family this was called "tradition." I remember the spring of my senior year, when applications for admission to college were due to be acted on. Like most of the others in my class with passable brains I had applied also to Radcliffe and Wellesley. But if you know my kind of family you will realize that Radcliffe, though intellectually respectable, was thought to be too closely associated with Harvard, and Wellesley too much like Smith with the disadvantage of being too close to Boston. No others existed; Vassar never came into the picture because it was in New York, and New York, except the city, was unmentionable.

The headmistress, Miss MacIntyre, was also a Smith alumna, and as her name indicates she was in background a Scot and had all the disapproving rectitude, together (I must say) with the sanctimonious sense of duty that seems to afflict schoolmarms who have the vocation to leadership that makes them into headmistresses. She it was who narrowed the range of choice for me and for the others in my class.

In the spring of my senior year that I began to tell you about, it was unimaginable that the daughter of Dorothy Miller Harkins would not be going to Northampton in September, especially as I had done well in school, having been awarded highest honors in Latin, English, and French; and, because I was a member of the hockey team (I was a hard-playing but undistinguished member of a mediocre team), was regarded as well-rounded. Why do colleges always want well-rounded applicants? Most of the interesting people I know are spiky and opinionated and eccentric, or perhaps I should say talented in but one direction. As for me, I was full of resentment toward myself for being too much like my mother.

On those fidgety days before the thick envelope arrived from the Office of the Dean of Admissions at Smith, my mother stayed uneasily at home, making lists in the breakfast room. Lists of what I couldn't tell you; neither, possibly, could she. After it was confirmed that I was destined for Smith after all, my mother resumed her normal routine.

As you can see, my mother was an altogether *admirable* woman; but she wasn't a happy person, though that's another story, and she wasn't good for me. It's not that she was too strong, but that in a way I was so much like her, and so much *smaller*, not physically but spiritually, personally. I always felt smaller, even after I grew up. She wasn't *possible* as a mother, not for me. So naturally I have tried to take this into account in raising my own children. And I have had other impediments to compensate for: at this moment, for instance, I am so tightly wound that I am telling you this whether you want to hear it or not. Oddly enough, I am telling you this despite myself; actually, I don't mind your hearing it, and after all you are professionally trained to

listen to such outpourings as this one. But I don't know what belongs to such an occasion as this. I don't know what's relevant, to use that overused word.

Now that she's dead—she died five years ago—I can see my mother better. She was always restless because she was afraid to be still. She was, perhaps, afraid to find that she was as empty as I have found myself to be; but that is speculation, and if it is true it has something to do with *her* mother, but I can't think clearly about my grandmother, that cool and assured and rather distant woman, who gave up a career as a singer to marry my grandfather. *She* could play the piano. She had a beautiful soprano voice, but so far as I could see gave it up gracefully and unregretfully. But no grandchild can know her grandmother; at least I could not.

My father was a shadow—to me, though he was strong enough in his way. He was *there* all right in the sense that he got up in the morning, ate his breakfast, and went off to work. He was the senior partner in a law firm that he and another man had founded many years before. I used to idealize my father's occupation by imagining that he lived the law, but I don't think he did. What he did do was just as creditable, as I now think: he was intelligent and resourceful to be sure, but I think he lived for the machinations of clubbiness or fellowship such that he had a good life apart from his family; and, not at all incidentally, the most important people in town were his clients. They were also the richest, but there's nothing wrong with that, is there? My father played a better than good game of golf, so that he was never at home over the weekends either. Certainly he was intelligent and conscionable as well as clubbable.

In the usual way that children take their parents for granted, it was a long time before I asked myself what was the nature of the relationship between my father and mother. The best I can do now from the present distance is to say that she lived her life and he lived his. No, it was a little more complicated than that. I can put it sharply by saying that my mother *allowed* my father to devote himself to the practice of law, together with its attendant obligations, so long as he would present himself as host for her notable dinner parties. And yet there was a little illusion or delusion there on my mother's part: my father was willing, but he could be tried too far; not often, because he was cleverly evasive if need be. My mother thought she had him on a string, but she did not. I was not so lucky.

The dinners! I hate dinner parties and never entertain in my mother's way. It is true that Richard and I do ask friends for dinner from time to time; and we do have the big milk-punch party on New Year's Day, for all Richard's colleagues and lab workers and a few of our friends from other parts of the university. And we sometimes give small lunch parties on Saturday, six or eight guests at most, for people we're really fond of. I like to cook, at least occasionally. But never my mother's kind of party. She liked to have at least a dozen at her large round dining-room table and sometimes another table set up for six or eight in the living room, even sometimes a third table in the book room as well. She liked interesting people, as she put it, and this often meant well-known people who had done something—and who, of course, would



accept an invitation. But they were nearly always glad to come to the house. My mother liked talk; she would never have used the word "salon," but that's what she was aiming for. I remember a lot of very gassy windbags, but that's cruel.

Here is an example: the minister—he wasn't very bright, I'm afraid—of the large church downtown to which my parents occasionally went, was invited for Sunday lunch and was asked by my mother what excuse there might be for the inclusion of the Book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament. Instead of saying the mere truth that the book was there by an historical accident, Dr. Williams, as he was called, felt put on the spot and tried with little success to reconcile its gloomy paganism to the Old Testamentary themes as a whole. Now, my mother wasn't really interested in the Bible; but she loved to challenge people, and most of her guests were more adept than poor old Dr. Williams. And as she never really cared to get to the bottom of any such question, she let her interlocutors off easily, before they became too upset, too involved. So, having started something controversial, she sloped away and at the end Dr. Williams no doubt thought, quite mistakenly, that he had explained Ecclesiastes. For my mother it was only a conversation.

My mother was a wonderfully *total* hostess, thinking out the food and drink from the freshly-roasted almonds to go with the drinks before dinner to the coffee and cognac around the fireplace in the living room afterwards. The house was on those evenings always full of flowers; she was a gardener, a devoted and knowledgeable gardener, so that in the winter when she had to buy the flowers for the house, she knew what to ask for, what was best. In the winter, for instance, there were often a dozen pots of cyclamen in the living room, and always a large vase of cut flowers, white daisies and white roses, which of course she knew how to arrange, on the table in the entrance hallway. Yes, the impression was, and I gladly admit it, deliciously fresh, not quite sumptuous, which would have been overdoing it, but clear and pretty and decorative. In the living room and in the book room there were plenty of comfortable sitting places, sofas and chairs arranged so that people could talk to one another. And paintings here and there on the walls; the best was a large George Bellows that my grandfather had bought from the artist himself, a New York scene, crowded with buildings and people, with a striking blue and gray and black palette.

The dinners took a number of servants, and the three that belonged to the house were supplemented for the parties by equally black and equally deft persons known to my mother, hired for the evening. By the way, my mother was wonderful with servants, and they liked her. She was direct and she was clear in what she wanted, and how she wanted it done; and she was generous in the kind of pay she offered.

That way of life disappeared little by little—for everybody, not just for my parents. For instance on Thursday night, when Bessie the cook had the night off, Mary the maid would cook the dinner, not very well, but adequately; and I remember the sense of surprise when Thursday was no longer covered, so to speak, and my mother would scramble eggs for my father and me, though often we would go to the country club for dinner instead. I think the last flickering candles of that sort of life were pretty well snuffed out by the end of the 1950s, perhaps a few years later, because after Richard and I were married

we were lucky enough to have Mary, a gift so to speak from my mother, for a few years, not only to cook but to help with the children. But Mary died in 1963 and we have not had daily help since then. My parents, who didn't die for another dozen years, were seen out by Bessie, who cooked and cleaned for them to the very end, even though somewhat shakily at the last, as she was a year or two older than my mother but in the end much more fit.

My father loved me—I was a child without brothers and sisters. Why should he not? I hardly knew him, but he did his duty from the beginning. He took me on his lap when he came home in the afternoon or early evening, and he faithfully took me upstairs at bedtime and kissed me good night, often treated me to a bedtime story—sometimes a lawless story of going swimming in defiance of his mother's orders in the creek near his house, but always providing it with a cautionary twist (the terrible cold he caught, or the nail he stepped on). I could feel his affection and I returned it. But the truth was that he did not have much time for me. The law and my mother came before me. I was the last and the least. So as I grew into adolescence and beyond my father seemed to recede, and having almost disappeared never came into focus again.

I can see so much more clearly now: I was an only child squashed by a domineering though well-intentioned mother and neglected by a busy though loving father. I was a nullity. That's what I was when I was packed off to Northampton at the age of eighteen. But to understand all, though it may be to forgive, is not to be cured.

There were two people at Smith who enlarged my life. The first was Timothy Prescott—Dean Prescott to me—the wonderful and no doubt ineffectual angel whom everyone loved and who, because he was loved, was dean of nothing in particular and did more good than all the other deans put together. He exuded innocent good will. When I read Emerson I made him into Dean Prescott, or vice versa. He was the sort of person who did not believe in anything but goodness because he himself was incapable of mean-spiritedness or ungenerosity. He did teach a course in eighteenth-century English literature, very winningly too. Now, years later, I see that his view of them was, though accurate, partial: for instance, he emphasized the bright rather than the dark side of Swift, the charm rather than the venom of Pope, the brilliance rather than the despair of Dr. Johnson. And, as I say, he was right enough: these are true aspects of these writers. But, as I see now much more clearly than I did then, Dean Prescott's view of the eighteenth century was, in effect, a self portrait.

And so you see what an attractive man he was. What was certain was that he liked me, and I adored him. He was sunny, his *joie de vivre* was catching. He liked to read, he liked to teach. He played the viola! And he made it possible for me to be with him quite a lot because he had in the college library a printing press which he taught me—and several others—how to use. This was attractive to me because of a taste for exactness, not to say exactitude. Many an afternoon I and the others spent in his ample corner of the library, setting type, locking the forms, and rolling on the ink with a brayer. I can still smell the ink; I can still feel the rhythm of the press itself as we printed—whatever

did we print? Oh, I suppose a poem of Richard Wilbur or Robert Lowell, or a short story by one of the more talented girls in the creative writing class—all on lovely handmade paper that Dean Prescott brought back from Holland. I still have some examples of this work, and I treasure them.

When Mrs. Prescott asked me for Sunday afternoon tea I felt like a real daughter for the first time in my life, or rather I allowed myself to redefine the idea of the relationship of a daughter to her mother and father. It was, in a way, as I now see, easy for them to be affectionate—they had no responsibility for me; their children were grown and away and I was, so to speak, a kind of postscript. In any event the Prescotts were two persons to whom I could devote myself uncritically. They were so different: Mrs. Prescott, Lily, she eventually asked me to call her, a great reader and abundant cook and not much of a housekeeper. And a pianist. The house was not a mess, but it was in disarray, and I loved it.

But something prevented a full surrender to them. They were perfect, they were just what I needed, but eventually I felt like Alice in Wonderland—growing smaller and smaller. They were too much for me. I had been too well taught in my girlhood. I had been taught to be nothing, and the Prescotts were a threat. I drifted away from them. But isn't that the story of my life? If I had been able to see clearly then, it would have made a difference. I could have climbed back, taken the drop of selfawareness that would have enabled me to grow to the Prescotts; but who ever does become self-aware until it's too late?

Perhaps you can interpret the final episode, the last chapter so to speak, of the Prescotts and me. My mother asked them—and me—to dinner in Boston, at the Ritz, where she liked to stay when there. The dining room, as you no doubt know, is really quite lovely, with its long windows overlooking the Common, and the food is excellent. Mother had ordered the meal ahead, just the sort of thing she would do and that she was good at; we did not have to take time to choose and so interrupt any conversation that might get under way. Mother was in her natural element, or so you might have thought: in command. Besides she was after all a trustee of the very college in which Timothy Prescott served as dean, and she knew him though she had never met his wife. But the Prescotts were decidedly ill at ease. I wasn't quite sure why. Mother was beautifully dressed as usual, but she wasn't at ease either. Was she nervous because I was there? Probably. Was she accustomed to meeting only the president and the other trustees? In any event, she began talking and could not seem to stop. She rambled. She *discoursed*. She spoke of the importance of teaching at Smith as though the members of the faculty were inclined to neglect teaching in favor of research, which she took to be marginal to their central responsibility. That was her phrase, "central responsibility." The Prescotts said little because they were given little opportunity to do so. I said nothing because I had nothing to contribute. My heart was frozen, especially when my mother spoke for me, putting words in my mouth. "Lucy has spoken so often of your wonderful classes, Dean Prescott. And she is so grateful to you for your many kindnesses, Mrs. Prescott. It means much to

her to be treated like a member of the family. And my husband and I are of course grateful as well." I never went to their house again.

The other large influence—yes, another father figure—was José Riojo, the Spanish poet hired by the college to teach Spanish literature after he had fled from Granada; he left soon after the murder of Lorca, who had been a friend of his. Riojo realized in those early days of the Civil War that things were going to go badly for the likes of him. He was not then famous, as Lorca was, but later became so. Meanwhile he had to live, with a wife and children to be looked after. Later I learned that the college took him on in a humanitarian gesture as kindly as it was ignorant: who in the late thirties knew anything about Spain except as a distant place where good and evil were being fought out? Lorca was a name because he had been murdered, but of Spanish writers and Spanish culture generally most people were then quite innocent. Still, Smith cannot have been disappointed in José Riojo. He was a presence. He was wonderful.

For not only did he introduce me and others to the great figures of the Golden Age—Lope de Vega, Calderón, and of course Cervantes: he also introduced me to himself, as a poet who with Lorca and Machado had inherited all that was so rich from the Generation of '98.

When Don José, as we called him, spoke, he did so with such a sweetness that we all fell in love with him, not because he was romantic, though he was surely that with his slender figure and ascetic formality of manner; he was sometimes betrayed, as it were, into laughter, frank and charming and lusty laughter. He was so *foreign*. He was a whole man, all of a piece, complicated and human: irresistible. And he liked me, *me*; because what I was able to do, better perhaps than most or all of the others, was to learn and speak and love the Spanish language and its literature. He did insist that I study for a year in Spain, the traditional junior year abroad. I went to Madrid, which I learned to love, not least because Don José told me where to go, what to see, above all because he put me in touch with some of his dearest friends, who looked after me tenderly.

I have always had an ear for languages, and there was something especially attractive to me about *castellano*, and the Spanish people with whom I became acquainted: the combination of reserve, warmth, and candor—just as it was embodied in Don José.

For me Spain has been a personal liberation. If I could be nothing in myself, I could be something in another language, another culture. You will say that should be enough, and I agree entirely—it should be enough, but it is not. While I am, in a manner of speaking, an impersonation I am free—my Spanish is excellent, and in Spain I am nearly always taken for a natural, a native speaker of the language. But after a time, reality returns. I realize that I have been on stage and that the curtain has rung down. I am back in my own country and my own language once again: here is where reality is and reality is nothing; or rather I am nothing.

And Don José disappeared: he returned to Spain.

About Richard and me: I may as well begin at the beginning, so to speak. It was not an arranged marriage, but it was certainly contrived. Richard had been the roommate at Harvard of Becky Johnson's brother; and Becky was my roommate at Smith. We were close friends because we had grown up together—our parents were friends and neighbors and Becky and I were in some ways much alike. But there's no point in saying too much about Becky; she's not a part of my story or my life: we haven't seen each other for years.

Richard had gone on to the medical school. He has always known exactly where to go and how to go about where he was going. He distinguished himself academically; he was also a gifted athlete: he was (and is) tall and slender. He could run fast. Not that he had much opportunity in medical school or for some years afterwards for sport; his notable well-roundedness—that word again!—of character and accomplishment surely did him well even there.

Contrived, I say. Becky brought him to Montauk, where my family had a summer cottage, because she had picked him out for me. I discerned rather than was told this, because for once she was diffident of specifying her reasons for bringing him to me.

And it took. Besides being dark and trim with fine incisive features, he had the kind of brooding face that sometimes goes with dark complexions; this aspect, needless to say, was attractive to me. He was also interesting in ways that medical students seldom were. He spoke Spanish fluently, his father having been First Secretary at the embassy in Madrid for several years when Richard was growing up. He liked music, and even knew something about it. I had never really listened to the Beethoven quartets—I was still in the stage of thinking the C minor piano concerto was the greatest piece of music ever written (and I have to say I still think it to be among the finest things I know); but he imposed the quartets on me, to my delight, and imposed himself on me as well. Looking back, I think it was a good contrivance on Becky's part. For Richard has worn well. He has remained interesting. I made a good choice, and I sometimes in my vanity think he did so as well, for all that I am sometimes a trial to him with my self-doubts.

Our courtship proceeded unhurriedly. I was far from anxious to be a bride. There were so many other things I wanted to do. I wanted to perfect my Spanish, to speak and read the language with facility. I had a taste for scholarship, and thought I also wanted to go on for the Ph.D., which I knew I could do in three or four years as my father was delighted to support this undertaking, which was in his eyes perfectly respectable. So I was to go to Harvard with my Smith B.A. in hand while Richard finished medical school.

I took an apartment in Cambridge but never went to graduate school. My mother interposed, in the following way: "Darling," she said, "I am so glad you're going on for the Ph.D. Daddy and I are very proud of you. And I spoke to Alexander Sturgis, who is a trustee of Smith and also a member of the Harvard Board of Overseers. He telephoned Professor Lida, the great Hispanist—he knew Santayana and even wrote a book about him. But you probably know all that. Anyway, Professor Lida will look after you."

That stopped me cold. I went to Cambridge all right, but never went near the Harvard Yard. My mother would be there too. Instead, I got a job at Jordan Marsh, in the advertising department, and gave up all academic ambition. But I was out from under, or so I thought.

Richard and I were often together. In the spring vacations we would go off to Bermuda, my mother not quite approving, but I didn't ask her permission. And when he finished his residency at Mass General we got married.

The children didn't begin coming along till two or three years later, after we were properly settled in New York, with a house in Riverdale. Everything was just right. Richard had an appointment at Sloane-Kettering; I taught Spanish at a little private school—it was near the Metropolitan—that has since disappeared. And then I got pregnant: good timing, for of course it was timing, thinking things out.

Adam came first and then Caroline, the right patriarchal order you might say. Mary was still with us, and she took all the drudgery though not all the terror out of young motherhood. Richard liked his job and loved me. The children were absorbing, intelligent, responsive—and very different one from the other: Adam was shy, and Caroline exuberant, and they were close to each other from the beginning. They still are, though Adam now lives here in New York and practices law, and Caroline is in Florence, where she is part of a team of decorative-restorers. But that is all remote from me now. Maturity makes the heart grow fainter, at least as far as children are concerned.

It would be so easy if I could point to something particular that happened to me when young, a definitive trauma that would explain my present discontent, and feelings deeper than discontent. My mother loved me, though perhaps not enough. My father loved me, though he did not devote a great deal of time to me. But surely there are many other people whose upbringing contained, so to speak, those lacks. I have nothing that I can put my finger on; on the contrary, I can count the many blessings that have been my lot—and I have sometimes been told that I should count those blessings. I am even ready to acknowledge, and to punish myself for, the strong sense of an *ennui de vie*, a luxury that only the well-to-do can afford. Yet, having said all such things to myself, I am no better off, no happier, no less disillusioned; discontented—always so *marginally* unhappy, so unheroically downcast, so merely edged with sadness.

Please don't tell me that I am lucky, that my life is full and rich and that I ought to be grateful. I know I am a person who has or has had everything, and more than I deserve. That makes me feel worse, more unworthy. Oh, every day is so much the *same*! Even the seasons depress me. April may be the cruelest month, but how I despise September. And Christmas: *loathsome*! Richard is my salvation, but not salvation enough. Last winter we went to Barbados in January after the usual hypocrisy of the Christmas holidays. I was supposed to like the sun and the sand and the leisure. But I hated it more and more each day; the sameness of the climate, the weather, the temperature of the ocean, and our hideous, and hideously expensive, hotel. I was bored to death. Is boredom a prefiguration of despair? You tell me.

My question is, can you banish the blackness? It's as simple as that. Because, if you can't, I don't know what's to become of me.

I know the hour is nearly finished. I can sense the end of the session. You yourself look as though you have heard enough for today. Naturally, and I don't say that accusingly: far from it. I know you have another patient waiting; and I suppose I am ready to go as well. Yes, it has been a help talking to you, but I am not really hopeful about the lasting quality of this confession. I am sure that the blackness will return. I shall go to the supermarket when I leave here; I have a list in my purse. Yes, a list: I am my mother's daughter, inescapably. Still, I suppose I can say that you have prepared me for that, even that you have prepared me to be sad. An achievement? I'm not certain. I can't promise you anything except that I know I shall be sad, and that I shall always fear the blackness.

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CLAUDE KOCH

## The Poem

In everything, surprise.  
Underneath the skin  
is where the mystery lies—  
Discovered in a breath,  
Whispered in a word.

When incantation's right  
Let what has slept arise  
And yield its fact to faith—  
So, once, one struck the rock  
To free the water's race—  
The flow a gift of grace.

Then things their secret names  
Rehearse. .

    Their summonses unlock...  
And time, who lords it over men  
Becomes the wide-eyed child again,  
Drinking from the rock.



CHARLES EDWARD MANN

## At the Museum of Natural History

Yellow-brown feathers and down,  
formal face and saucer eyes,  
the one-winged owl the keeper  
held on his leather sleeve,  
beat its one wing uselessly,  
turned itself upside down  
in trying to fly.

He'd come so far  
from the forest floor,  
his first swooping kill,  
the taste of wild rodent  
rended in his beak's sharp grasp.

And still  
he fanned that single wing,  
waiting for the other  
that did not exist,  
to open and lift him.

But the only way  
the bird could right itself,  
was to cease to struggle,  
let what he couldn't do be done  
by something greater,  
the keeper's gentle hand.

PAMELA HUGHES

## Bangladesh, May 1991

*for the dead and the living*

The earth turned us  
upside down and shook us.  
Giant waves filled  
the sky with water—  
soil and palm trees the sea.  
People fell into the ocean—  
fish onto land.  
The Sundarbans sang  
a drowning song.  
Our brothers and sisters  
swam to heaven  
on the swells.

We haul them in.  
There is no wind.  
We haul them in,  
nearly no sound.  
We haul them in  
with fishing nets,  
stack them  
on the beach to dry,  
weep over our catch.  
The sky is clean  
of clouds now—  
a soft safe blue.

A Story by  
LESLIE PIETRZYK

## *First Manassas*

It's not that I'm a Civil War buff or descended from a crackpot general who died in vain glory, or I'm one of those amateur historians with conspiracy theories to reveal to the world, or even that I get worked up about the Civil War—after all, my people were peasants tilling the fields of Poland at the time—but the Manassas Battlefield happened to be the right distance from the house, not too far, not too close, and visiting it was something my wife would have enjoyed, and without ever sitting down and planning it, I was spending much of the summer trying to catch up on all that, on the things my wife would have wanted to do.

My wife's the kind who'd pull over at every highway tourist center and lug handfuls of free brochures and booklets back to the car. She'd read them all as we drove, making notations in the margins, coding them by state or city for future use, mapping trips well into our future. She found things to see that the tourist books overlook.

So when I came across this brochure about the Manassas Battlefield, site of the Civil War's first battle, I decided to go. What the hell, it was another Saturday that couldn't be filled up by work. Her cramped handwriting boxed around the tight paragraphs of the brochure: "Could stop on way to Shenandoah Valley—combine C.W. battlefields with antique shopping—ask Marjorie name of B+B she and Phil found in New Market—go for autumn leaves??" I could barely decipher the beetlish words, but she was right, it would have made a terrific weekend trip in October, with the changing leaves splashed across the mountains and the two of us lost amidst Civil War history and the simple grace of the slat-backed chairs she admired.

This wouldn't be the kind of trip she'd imagined, but there was nothing I could do to change that, so I hopped in the car, pumped the air conditioning to high, and buzzed down 66.

If you read the newspaper or watch TV news, you know my wife, Judith Cane. Yes, that same Judith Cane. What's curious is how these horrifying freak accidents like the one that killed Judith take on a life of their own: You shy away from the slash of headlines every morning, the reporters and cameras shadow you, dogging your steps morning to night until you think you'll go crazy from the hopeless persistence of it all, and then one day they're gone like a soft mist burned away by heat, and you can't remember if they really were there. What's left is a silence clamped to your brain, a hollowness like an echo chamber, and that's the first time you realize your wife is gone, truly gone, and you beg for the headlines and the phone calls and the reporters to come back, to fill space again, but there's nothing. Nothing at all. No night could ever be darker or longer than that single second.

It happened about nine months ago, and there's nothing to talk about. Of course there's a lawsuit—isn't that about a prerequisite these days to be a

good citizen, to have a lawsuit tied up in a court somewhere?—and my team of lawyers are busily doing whatever it is they do. They telephone once a week so I don't forget about them, and they remind me the money will be slow in coming, and in what lawyers call sympathy, they assure me it will be a big wad. They don't use those words, big wad, that's me paring their words to the root.

As if the money makes any difference. But try telling that to the lawyers. Their smile swipes their faces as they talk about punitive damages, setting up commemorative foundations, blah-blah-blah, and on and on they go like wind-up dolls without once mentioning the big wad that'll be sent their way when it's settled.

But what the hell. Who am I to preach? I sued, didn't I? It's my contribution to the American economy, setting a string of lawyers in motion, like dropping a coin down a pinball machine. Bing, ding, ding, buzz. Watch them go.

I try not to think about it. That's why I chase away spare time on weekends by doing things like visiting the Manassas Battlefield.

Even though we're sweating ourselves through the hottest July on record, and the TV weather has concocted an index that tells what the temperature is when you take humidity into account and every day it reads something like 115 degrees, even though all that—the parking lot at the Manassas Battlefield Park is jammed. Cars are head to toe on the lawn, clustered around trees, low bushes even, desperate in the hope that scraps of shade will brush by eventually. I get a space being vacated by a family that from the looks on their faces, stopped speaking to each other six days ago; their license plate declares Kentucky, so there's no quick relief.

I'm reminded of my own vacationing family when I was young; any instance of genuine fun seemed a mistake, something meant for another group of people. More than the sights we saw or the places we visited or the souvenirs that were purchased for me, I remember the silent vows I made never to subject my own family to this charade. Where are my brothers now? One I haven't seen for three years, he lives in a village in the Andes mountains; the other I see practically every time I switch on my TV set since he's the spokesman for one of the fast food chains. He lives in L.A. and has latched onto the L.A. lifestyle as if it's a valuable commodity. When we talk on the phone he says things like "my spiritual advisor" and "yeah, well, like shit happens, you know, don't take it so personal." I have this feeling he's afraid to tell me he's gay. I don't care if he is, but it probably titillates him to think he's hiding something from me.

My parents retired to Arizona.

You would never guess we were a family, the five of us. We're more like a Christmas card list.

I love that Judith's family was a syrupy puddle that widened to cover a great number of people, even including a few neighbors, even including me right from the beginning. Judith sent out about four Mother's Day cards to different people, cards like "you've always been a mother to me."

The air in the little battlefield museum scrapes the skin, it's so cold; they must have the air-conditioning pushed down to the low fifties, maybe to

encourage lingering in the gift shop. Someone hands me a brochure just like the one Judith wrote on, and I'm steered to the guest book, almost as if I'm at a wedding reception. I glance through the page of visitors before me: Atlanta, Norfolk, Charlottesville, Charleston. Nome, Alaska, stands out until I notice the corresponding name is "Mr. Fuk Yu." Under Visitor Comments, a woman from Roanoke wrote, "Would be helpful to have refreshments available—i.e. cheese balls."

I scan the room trying to pick this woman out of the crowd, a woman who expects cheese balls to be served at a national park, but seeing these women plucking through racks of postcards, calling out gentle words to their husbands and children makes me think of Judith. She had the kind of papery voice that you strained to hear properly, so you listened closely, held your breath almost, because you were afraid you might miss something. When she was mad—which wasn't often—her voice crumpled into a whisper.

She was born and raised in Richmond, Virginia, and once a lady from Alabama told her people from Richmond spoke as if they had a mouthful of hot biscuit. I thought of that every time my lovely wife spoke, her words squeezing out around a steaming biscuit, balancing the need to speak with the need to eat. It seemed very southern.

I don't know why I'm here. It could have just as easily been me as Judith. It could have been you, anyone, but it was Judith.

"Excuse me, sir, where is the drinking fountain?" It's a teen-age girl, not one of those stiff-haired, fluorescent smart-mouth types who clutter up malls and fast food parking lots; this girl came out of the photo you find in a picture frame at a store: cool, even, unwrinkled, a girl you'd order out of a catalog to be your daughter.

"The drinking fountain?" and I swivel my head. This girl is someone you want to help. She'll move through her life that way, people leaping up to help her, never taking advantage of them or her power, only feeling grateful.

"I'm sorry," she says. "I thought you worked here." And that sums me up: I blend in. Wherever I am, people think I work there. Strangers ask me for directions, where the bathrooms are, if I could take their order, or how much the plums cost this week. If I were a different man, I would be tempted to bluff an answer for all these queries.

She continues, "I'm so thirsty. It was a long drive from Baltimore. My air conditioning went out last week."

"You're here alone?" and I realize that sounds seedy, but I'm surprised a teen-age girl would think to come to a battlefield by herself. "I mean, you're not traveling with your family?" That sounds worse, like the last question a hitchhiker in a movie hears before she's chain-sawed in half.

She's too polite to notice my awkwardness, and she merely says, "I'm alone. But my mother knows exactly where I am and expects me home by a particular time." She smiles as if to acknowledge that she knows I'm no threat but this is the way she's been brought up. It's a smile that says, I'm just doing my duty; now do your part and prove I haven't misjudged you.

I don't know what to say, so I half-nod my head sharply as if we've concluded a business meeting and agreed upon "action items."

She asks, "Are you here with your family?" Her voice belongs to an older woman who would know how to turn it into a weapon over candlelight. And

she's so polite, I didn't know they still made teen-age girls this polite. We could be inside an old TV show. Judith and I were just getting around to thinking about children, thinking about the diapers and college tuition and all the fuss and trouble and thinking, Hell yes. Two we decided, maybe even three, and secretly I would have been happy if a set of twins pushed us to four.

I realize I haven't spoken because she repeats her question: "Are you here with your family?"

I shake my head. "They're at home," I say. I don't want to tell her about Judith and watch her smile collapse into dull pity. I clutch in my mind for a story, a reason for my alleged family to be at home without me, but I don't need it; she nods.

She says, "I understand," and maybe she does. Maybe she knows more about sadness than I did at her age. "Well...thank you," though I've done nothing for her, and she starts to turn away to find the information desk and the people who really do work here, who can lead her to the drinking fountain.

"Wait!" I say. I'm about to tell her my wife is dead, I have no family, something to make her stay.

She looks at me. Her eyes are so clear they seem to be pure liquid, diamonds poured into a mold. They are yin-yang with Judith's eyes, which were black and brandished light pulled up from deep inside. And yet just as staring long and hard at red turns it into green, this girl's eyes become Judith's, and I'd say anything—lies, the truth—to keep her here, to keep these eyes fixed on me. Don't think it's anything sexual. It's not so simple as all that, it's loneliness biting into me.

"Have you been here before?" she asks, putting her hand on my arm, right where my shirtsleeve starts. "Shall we view the field together? After we find the drinking fountain, of course!"

I didn't know anyone still said "shall."

"The movie will begin in two minutes," barks a tape recording. Around us, families divvy themselves like a pack of cards being dealt. "Harry!" someone calls across the room, "honey, where are you?"; this sudden surge takes us towards the auditorium door, but I sense that something will be lost if we pass through. We'll remember that we're two awkward islands jutting into this tide of family vacations. I think of being trapped inside the dark auditorium, sitting on those hard chairs that someone's always clacking up and down, and already I hear two babies dueling, their shrieks raining like stones on their exhausted mothers. The air tightens, and all around me I see wives and mothers and babies. So I concentrate on this girl's eyes and try to make them into Judith's.

"Do you want to see the movie?" I ask. Without meaning to, I hold my breath, and ease it out when she says,

"I don't believe so. I'm really here just to get the feel of the place. How about you?"

"I can skip the movie."

Turns out the drinking fountain is right by the door leading out to the battlefield. She bends over the arc of water for a childishly long time, as if proving she really was thirsty. Then she hunches over the fountain and

splashes water on her wrists. "This cools the pulse points," she explains. "I'm prone to heat exhaustion. The school nurse taught me this trick." After she determines that her pulse points are sufficiently cool, she dabs water on her throat, her eyes lost in a blurry off-center focus, the way women look when they're absorbed with the needs and preparations of their bodies and faces; her fingers find the same spots I watched Judith dot with perfume. I'm not a father and may never be, but I understand in an instant how a father thinks, what a father feels.

"My name's Kelly," she says, turning her attention back to me. "It's an awful name, I know. My friends tell me I could give it more glamour by spelling it differently—they suggest K-E-L-H-I-E—but for now I have to stick with what I've got. My mother named me after her father, and she'd be personally offended if I made any changes at this point. So I'll wait until I'm 18 and legal. Are you named after anyone?"

I tell her I'm not, and she says, "How sad," and I realize she's right, it is sad. I don't even know why my mother chose this name instead of something else.

She continues in an informational way, "Everyone in my family is named after something. My little sister was named Raleigh, after the city where my parents met."

Her face slams shut fast, so I don't ask any questions, just say, "Shall we?" and I push open the glass door, allowing her to step out first. The damp heat's a brick wall set smack in front of us no matter which way we turn, and we pause to get acclimated. Judith called days like this "sponge baths." "You're never really clean," she said.

I don't know what I was expecting to see—skeletons? mess tents?—but the battlefield is no more than a pasture, billowing acreage rolled out as if waiting for a farmer to cookie-cutter it into corn or wheat or other useful crops. For a moment I'm surprised to see cannons instead of tractors scattered across the landscape, information plaques gathering baseball-capped families instead of clusters of cows. How could anyone dare rip apart this scene with the ceaseless cries and pain of battle?

I'm about to remark on the serenity, when Kelly asks, "Can you feel it?"

"Feel what?"

"The dead, the dying. The battle raging on through the afternoon. I can see it," and she stares so intently into the shimmering grass that my eyes follow hers, straining to see this invisible battle taking place in front of us. I see nothing, just the quick shiver of a breeze passing from one side of the field to the other.

"Sure," I say, "sure," but perhaps my voice lacks conviction, because the color in her face rises into quick pink.

Then she turns to me and smiles forgiveness, beckoning me to accompany her to the first metal marker. I stay put, desperate to feel the fury and fright that was the battle of First Manassas, desperate to understand at least one thing about this girl. It's a personal failure that all I feel is heat clamped down, all I see in front of me is a field of grass scorching under the July sun. I saw this through a car window in Wisconsin where I grew up.

I glance over at Kelly, and she's fumbling in her purse for something which turns out to be a black folding umbrella which she pops up as gently as a mushroom after rain. "I hope you're not embarrassed," she calls. "The sun damages my complexion." She holds it straight like a parasol, not lumped against her shoulder the way you fend off the needles of a rainstorm.

She sets her hand flat against the marker and gazes into the field again. Her posture is stately, the kind that used to come from balancing a book on your head and these days is strictly a gift at birth. "What brings you here?" she asks without looking back at me, almost as if she's expecting the field itself to respond.

I don't speak. A bee approaches my arm, backs off, tries the other arm, melts away. The tiny buzz roars across the silence. It should be a simple question, but it's not. I shrug.

She addresses the field. "I'm here because my great-great-great grandfather—I believe there are three 'greats'—fought in the battle of First Manassas." She twirls the umbrella slightly. "I suppose you want to know which side he was on. Whether he owned slaves. How many slaves. How many men he killed in battle. All the other bad parts." She turns and walks away from me, cutting over the path to walk directly on the grassy field. "What would you guess?" she asks, but she doesn't wait for an answer, and I watch her continue walking until she reaches the foot of a skyscraper statue, the prototypical general astride a horse. Her neck cranks backwards until she's looking virtually straight up. In the sun, the statue glows blue-black and puts spots in front of my eyes when I finally look away. The cannons seem safe in comparison to this giant alone on the field.

I was never good at this stuff, reading between the lines. That's something else about losing Judith: There must be so much about her that I missed simply because I didn't see what I was looking at, if you follow. I thought there'd be plenty of time, so I took it slow, I set a leisurely, methodical pace, like figuring out one star at a time before realizing they make constellations.

If Judith were here, she'd know what to say to Kelly; she'd fish up the right words to coax a laugh, bright smiles between them. But Judith's not here, there's just me. I walk to the statue, scuffing my feet across the gravel path, but she doesn't look up. Maybe she's realized I can't help her, that I need help myself.

What I notice first about the statue is the sinew-twists of horse muscle that roll across the great body as if these, more than anything else, interested the artist. But this is just a nameless horse, while the man is Stonewall Jackson. I stare at the pair for a few minutes, man and beast locked together as a solid chunk of metal, wondering what Kelly sees here.

"I've heard the winners always face the South," she says. "The generals who lost spend their eternity looking North."

"Not very forgiving," I say. "Why bother putting up a statue if you're going to be so petty?"

She ignores my question. "Everyone loves a winner," she says. Her voice is tinged like the edges of paper burnt over a flame. "This is the battle where he got his name. Stonewall."

"Oh?" I say, but I don't need to speak. She'll go on regardless if I'm here or not.



"He was over there," and she points across the grass toward a dip in the landscape, a fringe of trees. "The fighting was going badly for the South, and men were getting ready to head for the woods, abandon the battle, the war, their dreams, their honor. Then some general called out to his troops, 'There stands Jackson like a stone wall! Rally behind the Virginians!' So they did, and the South won. He was standing right over there, and my grandfather was with him. Great-great-great grandfather. Remember, I told you he fought in the first battle here. Now you know he was with the South, the losing side. The slave-owners."

I nod.

"The quotation's on the historical marker I was reading. I don't want to mislead you," she says. "I didn't know anything about Stonewall before I came here. Just the name. Stonewall Jackson." She repeats it several times. "It's a glamorous name, isn't it?"

I try to envision the name printed across a business card, written in gold on an office door.

"What are you thinking about?" she asks, as if she's just noticed I'm next to her.

"Why you're here alone," I say.

"No one else is interested," she says, and in those words, I see something else, a glimmer that would tell a whole story to Judith. "No one in my family cares. They're embarrassed," and it's an accusation of so much more. But then perhaps she realizes she's let something slip because her shoulders bounce a shrug, and she shakes back her hair. "It's a steam bath out here," she says. "Can you imagine being a soldier in this humidity, wearing wool? Can you just imagine the quantities of sweat?" She fans her face with her hand, then she reaches over and fans me. The breeze is tiny, like a butterfly wing beating to keep up with a bird, but the movement does penetrate a thin layer of sweat on my forehead and cools me slightly.

"I started to tell you about my family, my sister Raleigh, what happened to her," she says. The words are wrenched out of somewhere deep, her voice coils on top of itself as she starts, "It wasn't at all my fault, but I was the one with her when"; she talks faster and faster and fans me hard, almost as if she has to build up her own supply of energy to keep speaking. Then she smacks my nose with her hand. "Oh! I'm sorry!" she cries. Her cheeks glow pink, and she bites down on her lip so hard I'm afraid it will bleed. "That was so stupid," she says, "I'm so clumsy. I'm sorry, I'm sorry."

"Don't worry about it," I say. But I can feel blood clog my breathing. "I'll consider it a war wound at First Manassas." I don't want her to know about the nosebleed; it's humiliating to bleed in front of Stonewall Jackson, a man whose name means something.

She doesn't say anything, and neither do I, though I want to pick up the conversation she started. Finally I can't bear the tickle in my nose any longer, so I sniffle, and she says, shocked, "You're bleeding! I've hurt you!" Her eyes shine tears.

"I'm fine," I say, tugging a handkerchief from my back pocket. It's warm and sweat-soaked, but I press it to my nose and tilt my head backwards. I don't like this feeling of exposure, my eyes closed, my throat unprotected, but it's what you do for a nosebleed. That much first aid I know. Still, I can't shake

the thought that I'm on a battlefield, and I've been wounded. That this is a dangerous place.

"I've never made anyone bleed before," she says. Her voice sounds different now that my eyes are shut, I swear it does. It's a voice that doesn't belong anywhere, that's been disconnected from a body and left behind.

"Then you'll always remember me for that," I say. I want it to sound like a joke, but it doesn't. It's a pathetic whimper, a high school yearbook page: Remember me. Remember me.

"I'll remember you," she says. "I write in a journal every night. I've already filled up three notebooks since last year."

I cannot conceive of filling one notebook in double that time. What can be said? I work hard, I pay my mortgage on time, I don't go over my credit card limit, I don't snatch grapes from grocery stores. Things that couldn't fill a notebook. Is that bad? Someone has to do these things, someone has to be responsible. Someone had to stand by Stonewall Jackson not because of glory or honor or courage but because those were the orders.

I think of Judith overflowing a hundred notebooks. I feel the silk of breath wrap around me and I sigh in relief, she's here, then I realize it's Kelly, tiptoe so she can look into my face.

"Can I get you something?" she asks. "A cold compress? I feel terrible."

"I'll be fine," I say. I'm embarrassed to be bleeding in front of her, to have something as childish and stupid as a nosebleed. I picture notebooks filled with "Dear Diary" incidents like this one, giggles tumbled on top of each other, the whole mess shoved down a garbage bag by the time she's 21. You can't tell this to children, but there are things that will be forgotten no matter how many notebook pages you fill.

Her head bobs under that funny umbrella. I stare at her, trying to fix her still, keep time from forging ahead into the next moment, into change, forgetfulness, death.

As if looking into my face also admits her into my thoughts, Kelly says, "I wish I knew more about my great-great-great grandfather. I wish I had a diary or letters or something. I wish he left something behind for me. Like medals for bravery or a sword. If I had even a photograph." She pulls away from me. "Just one lousy picture. I bet I look like him. Do you think?"

Her voice has turned into a young girl pleading with Santa. She looks over to where the real Stonewall Jackson—not this larger-than-life version—stood stone wall-still, and the thoughts crank through her head as clear to me as a big-screen movie: Stonewall a smooth-edged statue on a nameless horse, his eyes solemn and unmoving; gunfire slashes the afternoon into tiny shreds; the heat bears down as the third enemy, the first being the Yankees, the second being the cowardice of the barely trained soldiers. At the general's right hand, as tall, as stone wall-still, is this great-great-great grandfather, his thoughts not with the family and home left behind, but on a spot in the unimagined future, when a descendant of his will walk the same ground speaking his name with reverence and awe. That's the best he can hope for, that's the only explanation he has of why he joined this fight, why he's here.

I want to say something wise that's worth remembering, words she'll think of years from now, long after she's forgotten where she first heard them, but

I don't know anything like that. I'm only a regular guy, not even a father—just a man.

Kelly breaks into my thoughts: "I lied. My mother doesn't know where I am, and she's not expecting me back at a special time. She could care less where I am or who I'm with."

I've closed my eyes against the sun, so I can't watch her face but from the way she brings it up, it seems to be a lie she's familiar with.

She says, "I lied because I didn't want you to think...you know," and I expect her to say "that I was looking to get picked up," but she finishes the sentence with, "That no one cared where I was."

The outline of the sun presses against the inside of my eyelids. This isn't the day I imagined; I thought I'd lug behind a sweaty tour guide through a field then drive home and cram something in the microwave. I thought I could pass time here, swat away one more long day. But here's this girl that someone should take care of, and I don't know how.

"You should sit down," she says, "I'm really worried about your nose."

"Don't be," I say, but the bleeding hasn't eased any. You wouldn't think much blood would come out of a nose. She grabs my elbow and crowds the umbrella over me.

"Come on," she says, speaking to a stubborn child, and keeping my head tipped backwards, she leads me to a tree halfway between the statue of Jackson and the place he stood when he was given his name. The crust of dry grass crunches, and I listen to unseen insects creak and buzz. The tree towers across the sky, splashing down shade; we each let out a spontaneous sigh and breathe deep, as if to replace what was inside with the cooler, fresher air from under the tree.

She props up against the trunk, but I stretch flat on the grass, feeling the thin quiver of blades against my neck and bare arms. I close my eyes; I listen to her retract the umbrella, tuck it back in her purse, slap at a fly. Could anything bad happen on this field now?

"I shouldn't have come here," Kelly says. "It's stupid to want to know more about my great-great-great grandfather. He killed people, he owned slaves. He probably was a horrible man." But it was just talk; she didn't want to believe any of it.

"It's not stupid to want to know," I say. "He's important, he matters to you. What's his name?"

She doesn't speak right away, and when she does, her voice rolls slow and sad, a dried-up creek in August. "I don't even know," she says. "No one remembers. All the people I asked, relatives, a horrible old great-uncle, my mother, none of them could remember. He's forgotten, totally forgotten. Except for me," and she starts to cry. "I'm the only one keeping him alive."

I listen to her sobs; I think of what I can say, what I know. But I don't need Judith here to tell me Kelly doesn't want to hear that.

So I say, "No one is forgotten." I pause, trying to add weight to the impossible words. "Why, I bet anything his name is recorded in a book." I sound eerie and jolly, an adult talking about a dog going to heaven, but I continue, and her tears let up: "They kept records back then of who was in what battle. You

can find him if you look, if you know what town he's from and you know he was with Jackson here at First Manassas. You can find out all about him, I bet."

"Do you think?"

"Sure," I say. "Probably even your family has stuff about him; they just don't know where or what to look for, and you can be the one to go through it, the first to know his name. Maybe you can find out where he's buried and take flowers to his grave." Ahead of her I see rows of dusty old books, stacks of molding documents, name after name after name of forgotten men scribbled one on top of another, each once somebody's son and now maybe somebody's great-great-great-grandfather. And this beautiful girl, this child, devoting herself endlessly to finding one name, one single name. "Sure," I repeat, but I can barely hear my own voice.

"It would mean so much to know," she says. "Just to know. It would be a way to bring him back. You probably don't understand." I hear her open her purse, then she blows her nose.

I saved the articles about Judith. I clipped the newspaper every day, bought the magazines and tabloids and ripped out the pages. At first I did it without thinking. I mean there was her beautiful face staring at me everywhere I looked, the same photograph I have on the mantel. It was instinct to clip it out, to save it. When I noticed the manila folder of clippings was bulging, I stuffed them in a box and kept clipping, until one day there was nothing to clip. I don't look at the articles. I just have them in a box in the back of the coat closet. What will happen is that someday I'll chuck the box without looking inside. But until then, I know that I have it. I guess that's something.

My nose feels fine now, just a little tender, and I open my eyes and squint. High overhead the leaves of this old tree shift and twist, catching onto a breeze that passes above us, sending down a sunny green shimmer. The middle of the sky is blue like the center of a deep bowl, turning lighter at the edges. It's that blue that makes you sigh without meaning to, without knowing exactly why you're sighing. This is what Judith would have liked best about the battlefield, sprawling under this tree and feeling grass prick her bare skin. She liked long deep silences, holding them so long that often I began to wonder if something was wrong, and just as I was about to ask, she'd say, "Isn't this great?" and then I'd realize it was great, it really was. So much I wouldn't have known without her.

My eyes flip closed again. If I could, I would choose to fall asleep like Rip Van Winkle and wake up 20 years later with Judith nothing but a faint memory of something pleasant that once happened to me, like learning to ride a bike. I'd give up anything to sleep through this battle ahead of me. The outcome is not in doubt, as is the case with many—if not all—struggles. Yet we can't help but go through the motions, can we, wave our bayonets a bit, call ourselves brave soldiers.

In a minute I can think of Kelly, I can find something to say that will make her feel better, I can turn my voice soothing, I can listen to her problems with her family, help her understand why a terrible thing happened to her sister and how it's not her fault, I can go somewhere and buy her ice cream or a Coke

and explain that life is incomprehensible and how maybe that's not all bad. In a minute that's what I can and will do for her.

For myself, for me, each day that passes puts Judith farther away, makes her harder to see, until I'm not sure that she possibly could have been as beautiful and wise and kind and wonderful as I remember.

Who she was is gone. Who she will become as time goes on is a stranger to me, but that's all I have, all that's left, this beautiful, wise, kind, wonderful, perfect stranger.

This tree surely was standing when First Manassas was fought and won by the Confederates. I imagine a young soldier, a nobody, a regular guy, leaning against the trunk or flat on his back in the trampled grass—maybe he's been wounded and waits for aid, or maybe it's the next day and he's surveying the scene of the finished battle where thousands of men died only hours before—and he's telling himself he did a brave and wonderful thing by fighting this battle, by fighting against the supreme enemy, and he'd never say so to his comrades, but all he sees before him is the beginning of a long, terrible struggle, a horror beyond description, something he dare not recount in his letters home to his wife and children, something he'll beg to forget as it happens and beg to remember afterwards. This is only one part, he thinks, this is the beginning, this is where we must start in order to reach the end.



GAY WACHMAN

## Father

They tell me that you rarely speak  
More than a phrase.  
They say you feel no pain; you sleep  
The slipping days.

Your thunder voice could terrify  
In anger, laughter.  
I mourn your death before you die.  
Linger no farther.

PAMELA STEED HILL

## The Proofer

Ridicule the man on the corner when I have the bounty  
 of my own absurd state?  
 Even should he swing by one arm around a street sign or  
 yodel  
 toward every passing bus, he cannot match  
 the madness of my news:  
 one of the Big Six it is called, this firm of downtown  
 accountants, soon to be my  
 superiors. On a lark,  
 I applied; in an hour, it was mine.  
 So now I read. Not the ribald Ford and his pitiful  
 whore; not the whimpering Roth nor worm-fed Burroughs  
 nor even a freshman rebuttal of life—but,  
 these papers,  
 some with numbers, some with words, all with financial  
 importance.

That word *importance* takes on strange meaning,  
 as though it too could swing on street signs and falter  
 just at the edge  
 of lucidity.

I wonder what now, if anything, will be clear.  
 Numbers, perhaps, and those that don't balance must be  
 circled in red, as are misspellings, type errors, and  
 quarrels between a subject  
 and its verb.

It happens often enough that I've a keen eye  
 for catching the little buggers.  
 Is this then what is called one's lot  
 in life? If so, then acceptance shall be  
 its lover.

At noon, the crazy man is gone and the street is mixed  
with wind and hammers. I have one hand  
to hold a sandwich and one hand  
to hold down my skirt. What is it that would blow my way  
if it could?

Rival noises, some so serene that even the jack  
in the concrete could not compete? Rival poets, come  
not to have a contest, but  
to console me in my preposterous line, to take me  
only for a moment  
to another living, knowing my hour is almost up,  
knowing my desk is stacked in white and that foolish  
self-absorption is a kind enemy to being glad one has  
a damn job?

PAMELA STEED HILL

## Wanting to Swim

In like moments, I rise  
to two surfaces. One,  
the actual water. The other,  
a horde of leaves piled by evening wind.  
Their dull musk flares beneath my nostrils.  
Barn swallows have left their roosts  
and stand on limbs eight times  
thinner than my wrists.  
They have no desire to swim.

Many years from now I shall die  
childless—a confession not tinged  
with regret, but joy. Mothers, I have no desire  
to be one of you.

I want nothing for the rest of my life  
but to be housed in water, charged  
with the courage to leave my dry thicket  
and crash through the silver green  
mirror, its surface wavering,  
a palm turned up, swung slow  
by the bones of the wrist.

In the autumn night, breezes  
bring down the color  
from the trees and create my castle.  
Its fluid cracks  
like new rafters, its breath  
stales the air on my skin.  
If I could swim,  
the world would be different.  
It would lurch and moan

in rubric tides, faint and come to  
in stripes. It would sing like the unborn,  
a voice filtered through soft stars  
glimmering under my arms, between  
my knees, through the matted folds  
of my hair. It would dive.  
Two tucked somersaults, a child  
leaving the air with a smile.



GERALD J. JOHNSON

## An Antique Rime

*An epithalamion for Terri and Stephen*

Sail west of sunset, past the rising moon,  
Beyond the charted seas and every map.  
A prayer to Brendan say for landfall soon  
Lest world's end drop you in the Devil's lap.  
God willing then his graces to bestow,  
On Hy Brasil you'll beach, the Blessed Isle.  
That sweet land's silver folk will call hello  
and bid you share their bounty for a while.

Ever young, those silver ones will show you  
The marvels of their realm—the birds that speak  
The tongues of men like Mandarin, Urdu,  
High German, or even Classical Greek;

The spotted cats with golden eyes; the trees  
With fruit that never rots; the honey pot  
Filled freely by their peaceful bumblebees;  
The grass that's soft as the High King's best cot;

The spring of ale that makes you glad at night  
With no penance on the following morn—  
All this and more they'll unfold to your sight  
And bid you live as to this kingdom born.

But mortals cannot stay, as you well know,  
Beyond the sunset or under the hill.  
Still, from this day I wish your lives to grow  
In blessings rich as those of Hy Brasil.\*

*\*In Celtic mythology, a place of wonders.*



## Arts & Leisure

BILL WINE

### *On Screen: The Things We Did Last Summer*

In every other way—sunshine, swimming, seashore, and scandals—it was just another summer season.

But as a page in American movie history, the Summer of '94 just might come to be looked back upon as the first installment of Whatever's Next.

Why?

Because this was the summer when the movie audience returned to movie theaters.

Yeah, *that* audience:

The one with VCRs and laserdisc players, the one with cable TV and Nintendo, the one with *Roseanne* reruns and baseball teams to fol—

Well, okay.

At any rate, if theater attendance is seen as any kind of barometer of audience enthusiasm for what the dream factory called Hollywood is telling us about ourselves, then the barometer is at 2.2 and rising.

That's 2.2 *billion dollars*, if you must know, an all-time record box-office take for a warm-weather season.

When you talk movies, this was *not* the summer of our discontent.

Now a box-office record being set is not news in itself. After all, it happened last summer too.

But this year was different.

Why?

Because this year's record did *not* result from the effects of a single runaway hit called *Jurassic Park* and it

did *not* result from exceptionally bad weather and it did *not* result from the late-summer baseball strike.

Quite simply, it resulted from more paid admission to more different movies.

Eight—count'em, eight—summer movies eclipsed the elusive and elite \$100-million mark at the box-office.

That's the equivalent of a five-day deodorant pad keeping you sweet-smelling for, say, twelve days, a record of staggeringly fragrant proportions.

So here we are in 1994, well along the road between the ominous 1984 and the hope-springs-eternal 2001...

And the mass audience is falling in love with big-screen movies.

Again.

Just as they did when nickelodeons first appeared.

Just as they did when sound first surfaced.

Just as they did when color first exploded, delivering Roy G. Biv as an emcee for our fantasies.

And while this cinema-embracing audience holds on tight, bombarded with data from the *information* superhighway they hear so much about, they're also on an approach ramp to the *entertainment* superhighway.

And the eight movies they flocked to all summer might provide some clues to the mystery of how it's to be paved.

The Super-8 projected: *True Lies*, *Speed*, *The Lion King*, *Clear and Present Danger*, *The Mask*, *Maverick*, *The Flintstones*, and *Forrest Gump*.

On the surface, an eclectic group of movies.



## Arts & Leisure

But not a random one.

Rather, a lineup of pop-culture attractions that shine their key lights on where we've been, where we're parked, and where we're headed.

*Maverick* and *The Flintstones*, improbable hits both, are literal representatives of Where We've Been.

Namely, in front of the television set, when we—and the tube itself!—were young.

*Maverick* caught us off-guard all those years ago as a comedy disguised as a western.

With an anti-heroic protagonist to boot, something you didn't see on TV every day in the late fifties.

For the movie version, James Garner passes the poker deck to Mel Gibson.

Who deals with the same 52-card philosophy of life:

Guns don't kill people.

Inside straights do.

As fifties tongue-in-cheek segues into nineties guns-'n'-chic.

*The Flintstones* was the first prime-time animated series and the first animated sitcom—part slapstick, part suburban satire, part *Honeymooners*, part *Huckleberry Hound*.

The movie is a putrid live-action theme park—the Modern Stone Age—as interpreted by over 30 (!) screenwriters (which is something like having two-dozen astronauts defrost your refrigerator), who slavishly re-create the original program, leaving no Flintstone unturned, right down to the tiniest pile of Yabba Dabba Doo Doo.

*True Lies* and *Speed* are Where We're Parked in the late twentieth cen-

tury—in front of the action shrine that movies construct so consistently and so colorfully.

*True Lies* is a gargantuan action comedy with gargantuan leading man Arnold Schwarzenegger as a secret agent doing a James Bond for the nineties—still tuxedoed and unflappable, but now married and on steroids.

With extravagant stunts, high-tech equipment, crashing vehicles, fiery explosions, and blasting weapons—a carnival of kiddie carnage with more corpses than you can shake a shtick at.

Movies don't move any faster than *Speed*, a runaway thriller with a throw-away plot:

Boy meets baddie.

Boy beats baddie.

Boy loses baddie.

Baddie builds bomb.

Bomb boards bus.

Boy boards bus.

Boom.

Young actor Keanu Reeves becomes an action star with this pedal-to-the-metal suspense thriller, a fast, furious, and legal fix for speed freaks.

*Clear and Present Danger* and *The Mask* represent where we're always parked—behind stars' bandwagons.

Harrison Ford, the dominant actor on the movie-box-office-champs-of-all-time list, is well on his way to his third blockbuster trilogy.

He was Han Solo in the *Star Wars* troika, Indiana Jones in the *Indiana Jones* trio, and is here CIA operative Jack Ryan in novelist Tom Clancy's series of techno-thrillers.



## Arts & Leisure

*Clear and Present Danger* is a "close-fetched" nod to the Iran-Contra contretemps, with director Phillip Noyce avoiding the clear and present danger of most thrillers—obligatory superficiality—by weaving action scenes into the fabric of a complex, engrossing drama about loyalty and the abuse of power in a post-Cold War world.

Looks like we'll be seeing Jack Ryan on movie screens once again, probably driving a Ford.

And vice versa.

*The Mask* marks the ascendance of a new star in the comedy firmament.

One Jim Carrey, a kooky comic with a silly-putty facial repertoire that makes him look like the wacked-out love child of Daffy Duck and Betty Boop.

This special-effects-laden comedy has the good sense to let Jim carry the movie by being its most special effect, entertaining appreciative audiences with goofball shenanigans, manic energy, inspired impressions, and cockamamie contortions.

But the summer's two mega-hits—and perhaps its defining duo of pop-culture signposts, signaling Where We're Headed—are *The Lion King* and *Forrest Gump*, which will in all likelihood earn as much as all the other "ordinary" blockbusters combined as they earn their way to the very top of the all-time hit list.

*The Lion King* is—ho hum—another masterwork from the Disney Factory, as it follows *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Aladdin* into the animation pantheon, extending yet again the boundaries of the genre in this golden age of animation.

As its immediate predecessors did, *The Lion King* dazzles and enthralls us, but this time without a source fable to draw from, without a human character to depend on, and with an unprecedented on-screen death.

Like an animated amalgam of *Hamlet*, *Bambi*, and *Pippin*, *The Lion King* is a life-affirming coming-of-age allegory, told against an African backdrop, which speaks to accepting responsibility and following in one's father's paw-prints.

But what stands out in bold relief as this cartoon Greek tragedy—overflowing as it is with emotion, action, drama, humor, color, energy, music, and fun—is the majesty of its artwork.

The startling precision and detail in sequence after sequence—heretofore unseen in animated films—is the result of the marriage between lush, savvy creativity and computer animation.

And a productive and fertile marriage it is.

But an even more spectacular peek into the era of virtual reality is provided by *Forrest Gump*, an absolutely astounding docu-fable about an American with a small brain and a big heart who, while his country loses its innocence between the fifties and the nineties, manages somehow to hold onto his.

And then some.

Among the host of trees this Forrest has going for it are an effortlessly empathetic actor/star in Tom Hanks, who brings an irresistibly sweet, goofy optimism to the cognitively-challenged protagonist.



## Arts & Leisure

And master juggler, magician, and storyteller Robert Zemeckis, who has already demonstrated his techno-humanistic mastery in *Back to the Future*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* and *Death Becomes Her*.

In the dizzyingly original parable, *Forrest Gump*, Zemeckis transports his main character back into archival scenes with actual historical figures—most notably our string of Presidents—as the turbulent history of late-twentieth-century America whooshes by.

Because these scenes are as hilarious as they are ingenious—that is, because we're distracted from the technique by the humorous content—we hardly notice that they and the other special-effects sequences comprise perhaps the most astonishing set

of self-effacing illusions in the history of the cinema.

They demonstrate—and this must account for at least some of the film's runaway commercial success—that, at this stage in the history of cinematic technology, anything is possible.

This one magical movie—as light as a feather, as strong as an ox, as colorful as fireworks, and as spellbinding as hypnosis—points to a future when even death will not prevent the right actor or actress from being cast in, and inhabiting, the right film role.

That is where we're headed.

And, as the summer of 1994 demonstrates, we finally have the Gumption to retire one of our hoariest proverbs:

"Seeing is believing."

Says who?



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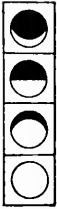
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